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# HIS BODY THE CHURCH

The Bohlen Lectures for 1945

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in New York City*



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This study of the Church  
as Mystical Body of Christ  
is dedicated

to

Marshall Bowyer Stewart  
Teacher and Friend



## THE JOHN BOHLEN LECTURESHIP

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JOHN BOHLEN, WHO DIED IN PHILADELPHIA ON THE twenty-sixth day of April, 1874, bequeathed to trustees a fund of one hundred thousand dollars, to be distributed to religious and charitable objects in accordance with the well-known wishes of the testator.

By a deed of trust, executed June 2, 1875, the trustees under the will of Mr. Bohlen transferred and paid over to "The Rector, Church Wardens, and Vestrymen of the Church of the Holy Trinity, Philadelphia," in trust, a sum of money for certain designated purposes, out of which fund the sum of ten thousand dollars was set apart for the endowment of *The John Bohlen Lectureship*, upon the following terms and conditions:

"The money shall be invested in good substantial and safe securities, and held in trust for a fund to be called The John Bohlen Lectureship, and the income shall be applied annually to the payment of a qualified person, whether clergyman or layman, for the delivery and publication of at least one hundred copies of two or more lecture sermons. These lectures shall be delivered at such time and place, in the city of Philadelphia, as the persons nominated to appoint the lecturer shall from time to time determine, giving at least six months' notice to the person appointed to deliver the same, when the same may conveniently be done, and in no case selecting the same person as lecturer a second time within a period of five



years. The payment shall be made to said lecturer after the lectures have been printed and received by the trustees, of all the income for the year derived from said fund, after defraying the expense of printing the lectures and the other incidental expenses attending the same.

"The subject of such lectures shall be such as is within the terms set forth in the will of the Rev. John Bampton, for the delivery of what are known as the 'Bampton Lectures,' at Oxford, or any other subject distinctly connected with or relating to the Christian Religion.

"The lecturer shall be appointed annually in the month of May, or as soon thereafter as can conveniently be done, by the persons who for the time being shall hold the offices of Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Diocese in which is the Church of the Holy Trinity, the Rector of said Church, the Professor of Biblical Learning, the Professor of Systematic Divinity, and the Professor of Ecclesiastical History, in the Divinity School of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Philadelphia.

"In case either of said offices are vacant, the others may nominate the lecturer."

Under this trust the Rev. W. Norman Pittenger was appointed to deliver the lectures for the year 1945, at the Philadelphia Divinity School.

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## INTRODUCTION

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MR. R. H. TAWNEY ONCE REMARKED, PUNGENTLY enough, that a man who seeks God in isolation from his human fellows is likely to find not God, but the devil, who will bear an embarrassing resemblance to his own countenance.<sup>1</sup>

It would be difficult to find a more striking statement of the truth that man, who (in Aristotle's famous phrase) is a *social* or *political* animal,<sup>2</sup> must have a religion which takes account of this essential sociality of his nature. Religion may have much to do with an individual's *solitariness*, as Mr. Whitehead<sup>3</sup> has told us; but in its phenomenal aspect—and, as we would contend, in its actual reality, as well—it is socially expressed and socially received. This very sociality is in fact a guarantee of the balance and proportion of the individual's religion. Not everyone would grant this, of course. A reading of Kierkegaard, for example, seems to lead one to an almost wholly individualistic understanding of religion, whether or not that was the intention of the great Danish writer.<sup>4</sup> Yet, on the other hand, one is obliged to note Baron von Hügel's reminder that even George Fox, individualist par excellence and enemy of all religious institutionalism, was nevertheless dependent on historical, traditional Christianity—an institutional and social reality—for all that he knew of the Christian religion; and indeed based his own special brand of spirituality upon the most ecclesiastical of all the gospels, namely, St. John.<sup>5</sup>

The revival of interest in the *Una Sancta*, as the continental



theologians have been calling the Church, is paralleled by an increasing concern for the historic tradition itself, its theology, and its worship. In such perhaps surprising places as the editorial pages of *The Christian Century* one has found the Church proclaimed once more as "the carrier of salvation";<sup>6</sup> and a high doctrine of the nature of the Christian fellowship is accepted again almost everywhere in the neo-Protestant world, even if this doctrine does not always manage to get itself expressed in appropriate liturgical action.<sup>7</sup>

The movement toward ecumenicity, and along with that the movement toward the reunion of the separated bodies in Christendom, has once again directed attention to the nature of the Church and the essential place of the Church in the Christian scheme of things. It is impossible to think of reunion without *a* church, and in the long run this brings forcibly into the foreground the question of *the* Church. Likewise, in the liturgical revival which is sweeping both Roman Catholicism and the Anglican Communion, the thought of the Church as the Body of Christ, whose inner nature is outwardly expressed in its sacramental worship, has been in the forefront of consciousness. Worship is the characteristic act of the Christian community; and it is impossible to stress the Liturgy as "the public work of the Church" without paying close attention to the community which offers the Liturgy. Indeed, behind all our modern liturgical discussion is the implicit idea of the Church as the divine fellowship which is *the public* whose *work* is once more to be restored to its proper and central place.<sup>8</sup>

With these considerations, and many more which could be adduced, it would seem that this is a time when a study of the nature of the Church is indicated. And such a study is all the more pressing today, because many of the older terms (if not



the older conceptions) seem to have lost their power to command men's minds. Furthermore, Biblical criticism has done its work in altering, to put it moderately, the base from which the development of the Church is to be seen as taking place. There are many questions—and vast questions they are—which ought to be answered, many and involved problems which require some satisfactory solution. In brief, what of the Church, once we have granted its utter necessity for Christian belief, worship, and life?

It is quite obvious that this book cannot attempt any adequate exploration of each and everyone of these many questions and problems. It can suggest a way of approach, however; it can indicate some of the answers which are not only intellectually respectable but also consonant with the great historic tradition which is in fact the Christian community's understanding of itself. Our purpose, then, is to state nothing new; it is, rather, to state the old truth of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church in a new way—thus being loyal, so far as may be, to the famous dictum of St. Vincent of Lerins, *non nova sed nove*.<sup>9</sup>

We shall begin with a consideration of the Church as seen in the New Testament, linking this with a consideration of the Church as in fact the present embodiment of the Christian tradition. Happily, various important books have appeared in recent years which summarize and state the New Testament conception. Perhaps the most valuable of these books is Fr. Thornton's remarkable *Common Life in the Body of Christ*, although mention must also be made of Dr. Flew's *Jesus and His Church* as one of the outstanding contributions to this inquiry. From the historical side, we shall move on to a discussion of the so-called *notes* of the Church, as expressed in

regular Catholic theology—one, holy, catholic, apostolic. In these chapters, due attention will be given to the place of the ordered ministry in the Church, and especially to the significance of the historic episcopate—about which so much theorizing and argumentation has been taking place in recent years.

The problem of dogma and authority in the Church will engage our attention in succeeding chapters, with some reference—as would seem to be required—to the relation of the Church's worship to its total dogmatic position. A discussion of the *other-worldly* aspect of the Church, with attention to the communion of saints, the departed, and the "last things," is followed by a chapter devoted to a consideration of the relation of the *Una Sancta* to *the world*—that is, to society or to the community of men and nations, organized apart from and outside of the Church and its faith.

Lest it be thought that the writer of these pages is intent on "teaching the Church" rather than "being taught of the Church"—especially on this delicate matter of the nature of the Christian society itself—it ought to be said that he humbly submits that which is here written to the judgment of the Christian Catholic consciousness, taking for his own the great maxim, *securus judicat orbis terrarum*. This will at once make it clear that he writes as a Catholic; he would add that it is as a Catholic of the Anglican obedience, an Anglican Catholic, that he has thought upon and set down the conclusions here presented. Any general interest which this book may have, therefore, will be derived from its attempt to state as clearly as may be, and with full recognition of the tremendous contributions gained from the more strictly *Protestant* bodies, what seems to many of us the essential *Catholic position* as regards the Church and the ministry. By such a statement, made without *odium theo-*

*logicum*, it may be that the great cause of Christian unity will be furthered, since the frank and charitable presentation of a position is a better method of approach to true unity than the hiding of differences by ambiguous phrases or the attempt to minimize beliefs and convictions in the interest of a rather artificially established uniformity.

One's obligations are so numerous, in a study of this kind, that time and space would fail for the listing of names and books. Suffice it to say that this book would not have been written at all had it not been for the kind invitation of the Philadelphia Divinity School to deliver the Bohlen Lectures in that institution in the Spring of 1945. To the faculty of the Philadelphia School, and particularly to Dr. Leicester C. Lewis, the author's gratitude is expressed. To his colleagues in the General Theological Seminary he is, as always, indebted for free and full discussion; in this instance, on the whole question of the Church's nature, as well as on detailed problems. A graduate seminar, under his direction, criticized and discussed the material in a kindly spirit. The Reverend Harold H. Hassinger of the faculty of Seabury-Western Seminary contributed to the study through certain suggestions which he will recognize in the course of the argument. It is of course to be understood that none of these gentlemen is in any way responsible for the views expressed in the completed text.

Parts of Chapters I, VI, and X have been published previously in the form of articles. To the editors of *Theology*, *The Anglican Theological Review*, *Christendom*, and *The Modern Churchman*, gratitude is expressed for permission to reprint this and certain other material.

In the hope that a wider reading might be secured for such a statement of the doctrine of the Church, much of the *scholarly*



*apparatus* has been omitted, while notes and references have been kept to a minimum. Otherwise, the volume would have grown to a size which would have made it impossible for the average reader. But the expert can easily trace, through the book, the source-material and the allusions to classical theological works, only a few of which are noted in the text.

Finally, the author would like to remark that the position reached in an earlier work devoted to Christology, *Christ and Christian Faith*,\* is assumed throughout the present study of the Church. Indeed, from one point of view this volume is but a fuller statement of half-a-dozen sentences in that essay on the person of Christ.

W. NORMAN PITTENGER

\* Round Table Press, New York, 1941.

## Chapter I

### THE CHURCH IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION

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"NO CHRISTIAN WHO IS NOT ALSO A MEMBER OF THE church . . ."

In that brief phrase, the witness of the New Testament—and, in fact, the testimony of early Christianity as a whole—may be summed up. With most varying phrasing, and likewise with widely differing emphases, the New Testament makes it clear that the way in which one became a Christian believer, in primitive times, and hence a participant in the Christian life, was by becoming a member of the Christian society. But it was not only the fact that membership in the society was essential to Christian profession; there were also—as essential elements in the Christian faith involved in Christian "church-appurtenance," to use von Hügel's phrase<sup>1</sup>—certain fairly well defined ideas, certain firmly held convictions, about the nature of that particular society of which the Christian, by the very fact of his being a Christian, was a member.

The Christian society, in the first place, was seen as being a *divine creation*.<sup>2</sup> It was by God's act, and not simply as a matter of convenience for men, that the Christian community had come into being. Classical for the expression of this conviction is the Epistle to the Ephesians; but St. Paul, whose own ideas on the Church are summed up and further developed in Ephesians (although doubtless he himself did not write the epistle),<sup>3</sup> says practically the same thing in Colossians, and, even earlier, writes in this vein in I Corinthians. As God had

called the Hebrew people to Him as His own, His chosen people, and had constituted them by divine act to be His special instrument for the realization of a divine purpose, so likewise, by the sending of the Messiah and through the events of the Messiah's life, death, resurrection, ascension, and the sending of the Holy Spirit, God had reconstituted His chosen people as "the new Israel." This new Israel is the divine community which is God's instrument for bringing salvation to the entire world, by preparing for the coming of God's kingdom or reign, and by exhibiting already in this present age "the powers of the age to come."

Such a conception, or some variant of it, seems also to have been in the mind of the Lord Jesus Himself. As Dr. B. S. Easton has argued at length, Jesus meant what He said when He spoke of His casting-out of demons by "the finger of God." He rejoiced that those who were of His company had themselves manifested that same power in action which was originally His, and so would be able to carry on His work for Him in places where He Himself, or at times when He Himself, was unable to go.<sup>4</sup>

The Church, moreover, was not only conceived to be the divinely established society which carried on the work of the older Israel. It, and it alone, was believed to be *the true Israel*. The older dispensation, *Israel after the flesh*, by its rejection of the Messiah whom the God of Israel had sent—attesting His place as Messiah by "many infallible signs"—had shown clearly that it could no longer serve the purpose for which God had originally brought it into being. Hence the new society, which was established by the Messiah's coming, death, and resurrection, built around belief in the Messiah, commissioned to carry on the work which it was believed He had



inaugurated during His period on earth, was to be the *true* Israel in which alone God's perfect work would be done, and by which alone the world would be made ready for the kingdom—the kingdom soon to appear from the heavens—when the Messiah returned in glory to vindicate His Church's work and to *restore* the heavens and the earth.

As the new and the true Israel, established by divine act in the sending of the Messiah, the Christian Church was described (in the third place) as the *new creation*, the first-fruits of the whole new order which would soon be brought in by the returning Messiah. It was precisely because the Church was seen as the new creation, the specific task of which was to carry on the Messiah's work, that the Church was described in metaphor as *the Body of Christ*. St. Paul pushed this metaphor as far as possible. For him the Church, like a human body, had many members, intimately one with each other by reason of their common bodily relationship, intimately at one, and more importantly, with the Messiah who was *head* of the Body which was the Church—and *head*, evidently, in the sense of controlling power, informing presence, inspiring mind. Christ was alive in His Church, a reality to be known and apprehended through the community and its life. But the life of the Christian community was life of a special kind or quality; it was life *in Holy Spirit*. This meant that the life of the Body of Christ, or life *in* the Body of Christ, was informed by the new energies and gifts which were sent by, or through, or were peculiar to, the Messiah, and conveyed through the Spirit released in the Body. The nature of the Spirit appears not to have been too precisely defined, nor even too precisely identified. In some genuine sense, however, the Spirit was both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of the Messiah—not unlike the

Spirit mentioned in the narratives and prophecies treasured by the ancient Israel, as sent by God upon certain men or certain groups of men when they were to be used for His purposes; or the Spirit in some of the ancient prophetic writings, promised as coming in supreme fullness when and if Israel truly turned to God and earnestly and obediently sought to do His will.

With important differences in phraseology, and with an almost complete absence of the crucial note of the immediate return of the Messiah, the Johannine literature has a view of the nature of the Christian society which is parallel with that of St. Paul. Here the fellowship in love, witnessed by the sharing in Holy Spirit, is a new life in community, through which the risen Lord is known, His presence made available to His followers, and through them to the world outside of the Christian fellowship. The believers are to do what He did, "and greater things," because they are incorporated into that fellowship whose innermost life is "walking in the light" brought by the incarnate Word of God of whose "grace they have all received" in super-abundant measure. Once again, the Church is a divinely established, divinely commissioned, and divinely empowered fellowship, one with its Lord and manifesting His life to the world.

Elsewhere in the New Testament, such a conception—or one in no fundamental respect dissimilar—is maintained either explicitly or by implication. The Gospels themselves are books of the Church, and bear their witness to the same notion of the Church, when once they are seen as the record of that community's contemporary belief about its own nature and the expression of this belief in life, expressed in terms of their origin in the Lord who, as head of the Church, is still present

with them "always, even unto the end of the world." And whatever degree of precise historicity we may assign to the narratives in Acts, the same sense of the Church as the divinely established, new Israel, the new creation into which converts are to be brought in order that they may become Christians, is pervasive of the entire book.

With so much by way of summary of the New Testament evidence, we are prepared to consider "the residual significance" of this picture in our own modern understanding of the nature of the Church. And it is essential to begin with the simple and obvious, but often slighted, fact that Christianity is a historical religion. It is built on events, historical happenings, or on what are supposed to be events and happenings. As Dr. William Temple<sup>5</sup> has put it, "Christianity can never be dissolved into a series of beautiful ideas; it is rooted in an historical person, who lived at a definite point of space and time and was 'crucified under Pontius Pilate. . . .' It was and it always has been a narrative of events which actually occurred in history and revealed, so Christians claimed, the mind and purpose of the eternal will, and were thus determinative of all history." And again, the revelation in which Christianity centers is, says Dr. Temple, "a life actually lived, culminating in an actual death and actual resurrection, upon the plane of history." Christianity, therefore, cannot be said to be a doctrine, a system of theology, a code of ethics, a mode of worship, or even a way of life, although doubtless it involves and implies all these things. In the first instance, it is a historical fact, believed by Christians to have been wrought by God in human terms, with certain highly significant consequences which inevitably flow from that event.

Now we have said all this because it leads to one obvious



conclusion, which has tremendous bearing on the nature of the Christian Church. It may be stated briefly: The result of the fact of Christ was the fact of the Church. The series of historical events which occurred in Palestine, which later Christian thought interpreted as the very incarnation of God in the person of His Son Jesus Christ for the salvation of men—this series of events caused there to come into being, on the plane of history, a society which was knit to that Christ by worship, love, and obedience. This is the only interpretation of the original picture, of the beginnings of the Christian Church, which makes sense of the material found in the New Testament. And since the consequence of the act of God in Christ was precisely this (not merely as the *after-result* of His death and resurrection, but also, as von Hügel<sup>6</sup> pointed out, because during His lifetime He had gathered a group of men and women to be "with Him" as sharers in His work and companions in His journeying and "learners in His school") the Church cannot be properly understood or even really known, in its true essence, apart from that act of God. The converse is also true. For the Church is, in fact, the reflex of the act of God in Christ. Or, otherwise stated, it is the divine and inevitable consequence or result of that which Christian faith conceives God to have done for man in Christ. It is, then, as much part of the gospel as is the Lord Himself. The gospel is the good news of God's mighty act for man's redemption; the Church is the community which is not only the bearer of the message of God's act, but is also the actual result of the act, in which its benefits are found. Hence, in a true and important sense, the Church is very redemption itself.

The total New Testament picture, both in its own integrity and when seen from the standpoint of Christian faith as it



looks back retrospectively to this account of its origins, is the picture of the creation by God of a society which will so mediate the salvation of Christ that it will be, in its inner reality, His *Body*. It will be Christ's—that is, God-in-Christ's—essential instrument in bringing redemption to men. Obviously, as the primitive Church so clearly understood and as modern scholarship has made certain, this community sprang from the older Israel. It is not entirely *de novo*, any more than the Incarnation itself was an entirely new act of God without relationship to the past history of man. In each instance, Jewish religion is the essential preparation for that which was newly wrought and newly established. But in each instance also, something *was* newly wrought and newly established. The supreme and crucial act of God for men, therefore, is not Christ alone, nor is it Christ and His Church; rather, it is Christ-Church, Christ in His Church and His Church in Him as its Lord and sole meaning.

This fundamental Christocentrism of the Church, however, is not to be understood in a *falsely* Christocentric way, as if it were directed to the humanity of Jesus alone.<sup>7</sup> On the contrary, as the Lord Jesus Himself is portrayed both in the New Testament and in central Christian theology as uniquely significant for the very reason that He is God-in-human life, God-made-man, God-Man, so the Church is related to Christ as Head by way of its being the society in which God, *through* the humanity which He has taken to Himself in Christ, is carrying on the work of bringing others into that Body which (as Ephesians puts it) is in the end to be the fullness of Christ.

As we have indicated, the converse of the statement that Christ is essential to the Church is also true—namely, that the Church is essential to our knowledge of and communion with

Christ. New Testament criticism in recent years, and more especially since the beginning of the investigation of sources by the form-critical school,<sup>8</sup> has insisted that it is impossible to understand, or even to know, the historical figure of Jesus, in any genuinely significant sense, unless He is approached through the life and faith of the community which, in Dr. John Knox's fine phrase, "remembers Jesus."<sup>9</sup> But this is not true alone of historical research. It is even more true of the dogmatic understanding of Jesus, and the life of communion with Him as Lord. He can never be correctly assessed or satisfactorily comprehended, in His total Christian significance, apart from the Church and its dogmatic witness—and, what is more, apart from the Church as itself the community which, in a sense that is much deeper than conventional, "remembers Jesus." The reason for this is simply that the Church is, so to say, the other side of the story; it is the divine community which is the Body of Christ, the special instrument for His continued relatedness to the world, so far as His incarnate life and its benefits are concerned.

This is not to say, of course, that there is no knowledge of God apart from the Church. That would be an absurd claim, and false on the face of it. Neither is it to deny that outside the Church and apart from the Church's faith, much can be known even about the historic figure of Jesus. At this point, Brunner has gone too far.<sup>10</sup> This historic Jesus is *not a mummy* when He is approached without Christian faith. It is certainly true that the witness of the primitive Church, as embodied in the *forms* collected in our gospels, is our only source for knowing more about Jesus than that such a person existed at a given time and place. But granted this, a non-believer can surely use the materials to learn something about a real, historic figure, who

can be studied, to some degree understood, and to some degree *followed* by loving souls. But He cannot be understood in the full significance of His person, as an act of God in human terms, without a dependence on the Christian Church; lacking such dependence, He cannot be *followed* in the sense in which historically Christians have used the phrase. For this, the Church itself is involved as being itself part of the significance of Christ, and part of the following after Him, since it is the continued and yet identical act of God in human terms—the Body of Christ present in the world through the ages.

It may be objected that, empirically speaking, the Church does not "look like this." The objection can be allowed. Indeed, to contradict it would be blind and presumptuous. The sin, error, and weakness of the Church as empirically perceived are certainly facts and tragic facts; and to them due consideration must be given in another place. But at the moment we are concerned with the *essence* of the Church, its true and essential being in the divine intention, with that which in eternal fact it really is. Furthermore, we are concerned with at least one empirically verifiable fact—that, apart from the Church, there would today be no genuine knowledge of Jesus, no adequate understanding of Him, and no self-forgetful love, worship, and obedience directed toward Him, beyond that possible of any other rather vaguely known historical figure. *Had it not been for the Church* the New Testament would not have been written. We should then be obliged to depend, for our knowledge of the Lord, upon the few references in Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny, and perhaps Josephus, in which some mention is made of Jesus. Or, if the New Testament *had* been written, and the Church had died out of the picture shortly after the writing, we should then have had a



series of pamphlets that would have been without an institutional *carrier* and would very likely have gone the way of other and similar books of the time. Jesus would have a significance, ultimately, not unlike that of Apollonius of Tyana or some other religious leader of the Greco-Roman period. Whether we happen to like the fact or to dislike it, it *is* the fact that the community has made Jesus a reality, and for Christian faith has made Him a reality that is more than man. Of course the community did not *create* this figure; but it sprang into being around Him, and regarded itself as meaningful only because it was *His* fellowship, at first as the band of disciples and followers in His earthly days, and later as His continuing Body, which had been divinely established for this very purpose.<sup>11</sup>

There can be no doubt that among the religious problems of our time there looms large, for Christians, the relation of the empirical Church, in its sin, weakness, and error, to the Church as the Body of Christ. To this problem we hope to give attention elsewhere; but here we must say that practically the problem involves at least the answer that the first great task of the Church is, in familiar words, "to be the Church."<sup>12</sup> This means that the Church must realize, by such penitence and prayer as are hers, the nature which in fact is already real in God's intention and purpose. The Church does not strive after an ideal; instead, it realizes, or must realize, the truth about itself.

The nature of the Church as the Body of Christ must now be more fully described. This Pauline phrase, classically found and developed with considerable picturesque detail in I Corinthians,<sup>13</sup> is without doubt the most satisfactory description of the true character of the Christian community. As St. Paul himself develops it, the notion seems preeminently biological: the Church, that is, is clearly intended to be analogous to the



human body—it is a living organism. This understanding of the Pauline notion is borne out by the apostle's references to the members of the Church, who are described as being inter-related and interdependent, like the integrated parts of a living organism; it is likewise indicated by his use of the term *head*<sup>14</sup> for Christ himself; and it is shown by his conception of an indwelling principle of unity which works through the Body—or, perhaps more accurately speaking, *is* the Body in its integral aspect—and is referred to as the *Holy Spirit*. Obviously the phrase *Body of Christ* cannot be pressed to absurd lengths, because it is a metaphor and remains a metaphor. Yet it is not *just* a metaphor. And even if, in St. Paul himself, the relation of Christ as head and informing life of the Body to the Holy Spirit as principle of unity and integral life of the Body is ill-defined, and in some of his references seems to be rather confused, the total picture emerges plain and clear. The metaphor of the Body of Christ is not *mere* metaphor; it is to be taken very seriously, as being for St. Paul the only adequate description of the Church. It is vivid and it provides illumination for our own thinking.

For what is a body? In the sense in which, plainly enough, St. Paul is using the term, and in the meaning which can properly be ascribed in such a conception as that now engaging our attention, a body may be defined as an instrumental agent, a vehicle of expression, a means of persisting identity and outward-moving action, a way in which some invisible or spiritual reality manages to *get itself across, to make itself known*. Clearly what is implied, therefore, in the picture of the Church as the Body of Christ is that as man's soul is expressed and operative through the body, so Christ, who is integrally one with His Church, uses that Church (and uses it as a reality

united to Him in the most intimate manner) for the purpose of getting His work done in the world after He has been withdrawn from the world so far as His personal physical body is concerned. The Church becomes then, as it were, "the social humanity of Jesus";<sup>15</sup> and of it may be predicated much, if not everything, that could be predicated of His personal physical humanity in the days of His flesh.

Such a conception implies, in the first place, the closest possible relation of the Church as Body of Christ to the Lord Himself. And by that token, it also implies the closest possible relation of the several members of the Church one to another. As they are knit together with Christ, so they are knit together one with another, in that total unity of life which is theirs in and by Christ Himself. Without *Him*, that unity would not exist; with Him as the bond of union in the organism which is His identical expressive medium, the unity is possible and inevitable.

Hence it follows, as the proper consequence of such *life-in-union*, that the particular quality which distinguishes the Christian society from all others is charity. This indeed is logically implied by such intimate fellowship as St. Paul has insisted must mark the Church as the Body of Christ. Quite apart from any particular position in Christian ethics, and even without our Lord's command that we "love one another," it would be necessary for the Church to have such *life-in-love* if it be truly the Body of Christ. Life-in-union *means* life-in-love. This is because the life of Christ indwells the Church and knits it into one; and, if that be true, the most intimate possible union of Church and its Head, Christ, and of members of the Church one with another, must exist. Such a union is union-in-love. Love, as we are using the term here, is of course to be understood

as neither indiscriminate sentimentality nor sexual passion. It is that mutual interpenetration, mutual interrelatedness, mutual concern, which is suggested in human relationships but in them is always and to some degree frustrated or marked by self-seeking or desire for possession.

The Russians have used the word *sobornost* to describe this fellowship-in-love. They insist, quite correctly, that it is the peculiar and identifying mark of the Christian Church. Where such charity is not openly exhibited, it is a sign that the members of the Church have failed to be true to that which is in very fact the essence of their life-in-union as Christians in the Body of Christ. When such charity does manifest itself in behavior and in interior spirit, it means that the true nature of the Church, latently true at all times because the Church is eternally the Body of Christ, is becoming patently clear to the world, through the realization by the members of that which indeed they and the Church are. This conception is, perhaps, the most interesting and valuable contribution which Russian theology can make to the West; we shall do well to penetrate deeply into its implementation in the writings of such thinkers as Khomiakov.<sup>16</sup>

Another implication of the conception of the Church as an organism, an integral unity which is the Body of Christ, is that every aspect of the Church's life has an interrelationship and interdependence with every other aspect. It is often recognized that this is true of members of the Church: if one member suffer, the others suffer with him; if one rejoice, so do the others. But the principle is true likewise of the various areas of the life of the Church itself. Its faith or essential dogmatic affirmations; its worship and liturgy; its disciplined life or way of living, so far as its members are concerned in



their personal lives and in their corporate Christian witness to act christianly; and also its ministry or means of continuing its several functional activities—all of these are so related one to another, and so dependent one on another, that harm to one will eventually result in harm to the others. On the other hand, further clarification of any one, fuller realization of the possibilities inherent in it, and such development and growth as may enhance the significance of any part, will bring about similar clarification, realization, and enhancement in the others. Naturally, it should be remembered that no single aspect of the Church's life can be overdeveloped at the expense of the others. In a physical body, such overdevelopment of one member produces internal maladjustment and poor health, and can result in death. Likewise in the Church, development and growth are to be balanced and sane. Overemphasis can produce maladjustment and do much damage to the Church's life. The faith of the Church, the worship of the Church, the supernatural life in grace which belongs to the Church and its members, the Church's ministry, are, each of them, equally essential to the Body of Christ; each functions best when it serves the whole; the whole is most itself when each is held in due balance and proportion in regard to the others.

The bearing of these considerations on certain contemporary problems facing the Church would appear obvious. They must be investigated in some detail, for they will yield much light and assistance as we face the modern world, the demand for unity, the nature of dogma, the place of worship, the necessity for Christian personal and social action. But the principle here enunciated would seem eternally significant. The Christian community is an ancient, socially conveyed, tradition of faith, worship, and life; and the carrier of this tradition is itself his-

torically *conditioned*, to use the technical barbarism, by its own past, as is true of any organism. Furthermore, the Christian community belongs more to the order of vertebrates than to that of invertebrates; that is to say, it requires some persisting skeletal structure which shall guarantee persistence of type and the identity of being which appertains to a healthy vertebrate organism. Such a guarantee, not unlike a skeletal structure, we may well believe, is provided for the tradition by the historic ministry of the Church, as it has developed from inchoate beginnings into a now ancient yet contemporaneously effective instrument for the maintenance and propagation of the Christian faith historically understood, the conduct of liturgical worship for the community, and the empowering and expressing of the distinctively Christian moral standards and qualities.

This brings us directly to the final point which should be made in this connection. As the Church is the Body of Christ, the Church is by that very token a society that is *directly* related to the act of God in Christ. This relationship must be given in historical terms, since it is a kinship existing in a world which is historically determined. The duration of the Body of Christ in time, its historical continuity, its connection with its own past, and through that past with the central fact of the Incarnation of God in Christ and the atoning work wrought by God through Him, are the guarantee of the Church's true nature and the certification that it is here, not by accident or incident, but as an *essential* element in the total act of God by which the world's redemption was effected.

On the other hand, this historical continuity does not preclude future development. In fact, it alone is the condition which makes safe and sound development possible. Picturesquely put, Christianity is a historical tradition, with the

present age as the spearhead of the tradition, pushing on into the future. We may therefore confidently expect that the Body of Christ will continue to grow, even to change, in certain areas of its expression. We today cannot dictate the Church's precise manner of expressing its faith, worship, or life, or even the arrangement of its ordered ministry, when the Church shall have grown to its proper fullness, millennia hence, if that should ever be. But the historical continuity of the Church with the act of God in Christ, and the necessity for persistence of type and identity of being, will mean that the Church does not *go back on* its own past. It develops *from* its past; it does not develop *in contradiction* of it.

This may mean, for example, a deepening understanding and application of the faith in Jesus Christ as God-Man, God-in-human life; it may suggest a constantly renewed and expanding appreciation of the significance of the Eucharist as the means of worship by which that faith is continually stated in the community's life and imparted to it; it may demand a wider and wider implementation of the supernatural standards and qualities of Christian behaviour; and, so far as the ministry is concerned, it may imply a development of the various "orders of ministry" which will more satisfactorily fulfil their function as representative of the Church in effecting its life, worship, and work. This need not involve, and, it may be said with assurance, *must* not involve, the discarding of any fundamental element in the Christian tradition. It does involve, and *must* involve, the fuller development of the meaning of that tradition, and its renewed application to every new circumstance in which the Body of Christ finds itself.



## Chapter II

### THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

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#### THE CHURCH IS ONE.

In the Nicene Creed, and also in most of the formal textbooks of theology, the first of the "notes" of the Church to which attention is given is the unity of the Christian society: "I believe one . . . Church." Such a conviction as to the fundamental unity of the Church may be traced back to the earliest days of Christianity. St. Paul and St. John had occasion to point out that the fellowship of Christian believers has a certain oneness which underlies all difference. "The Body is one," said St. Paul; and in St. John it is asserted, in words placed in our Lord's own mouth, that the company of Christians is to be one, even as Christ and the Father are one. Likewise, in St. Matthew, the situation in the primitive Church is reflected in Christ's words as to the unity of the brethren under their common Master.<sup>1</sup>

Now this essential unity of the Christian Church must be expressed in and realized through faith, worship, and life, since the Christian tradition is articulated in these three ways. The Church of Christ is a unity, in affirming the facts and the truths concerning the act of God in Christ which is for the Church the central and unique revelation of God, no matter how variously these facts and truths may be interpreted. And it can safely be said that the Christian *religious bodies*, which are in what we may most conveniently call the mainstream of historic Christianity, are bodies in which such central facts and

truths are most consistently and insistently maintained. As the grasp on these *credenda* is relaxed in any group, there is an observable drift away from the unity of the Church.

It is similar with Christian worship, particularly as that worship finds its expression in sacramental action. The unity of the Church demands and possesses an outward and visible manifestation in a common approach to a common Father through a common rite. As a matter of historical fact, the central tradition of Christianity centers its worship in the Eucharist and finds in that sacramental rite a unity which transcends all difference—although the differences in interpretation of the sacrament *are* real and obvious. And where the Eucharist is minimized or disregarded, the sense of the unity of the Church is weakened and tends to become, not a realized fact, but a desirable ideal.

Again, in the Christian life the Church's unity is to be found. By the Christian life we mean fellowship in Holy Spirit, made manifest in a supernatural and *engraced* life which is nourished by sacramental worship and built around the central affirmations of Christian faith. This perhaps is the broadest unity of the Church, so to say; at least, in respect of actual outward manifestation, it is clear that Christians who differ on many points may and do discover a deep and deepening fellowship in their common spiritual life which cuts under and can be maintained across all temporary separation and division.

It is, of course, obvious that the fact of separation and division is not to be disregarded. Indeed, that fact is the most patent of all facts to the casual observer. Despite the singing of hymns which assert that "we are not divided," it is all too clear that the Christian Church, to empirical observation, *is* divided. The manner and cause of its division are naturally

interpreted very differently, but on any reading there is division. And this appears to be in quite complete contradiction to any meaningful assertion of the Church's unity. Hence it would be absurd to overlook this empirical fact when the Church's true unity is asserted. The spectacle of Christianity rent by "our unhappy divisions" is too much before our eyes for us to fail to remember it when we are thinking of, and professing credally, a unity which essentially appertains to the Christian fellowship.

It is of immense importance, at this juncture, to make clear something which is frequently forgotten—namely, that the true unity of the Christian Church is a *supernatural* unity. The Catholic Church is one, because it is the Body of Christ, who is one. Its unity is not founded in, although it most certainly ought to be expressed through, the empirical institution, in our human world, which is known as *the Church*. It is by an insistence on the supernatural unity of the Church that we shall come to see the real point of the dogmatic assertion of unity; it is not by a stress on the empirical institution, which so plainly has its sad divisions. It is now our task to develop this argument.

The Church is the Body of Christ, as we have seen in earlier pages. Its purpose in this world, and its purpose in eternal regard as created by God for Himself and for His ends, is to be the continuing instrument or vehicle or means by which the abiding person and work of incarnate God shall be maintained and extended in the human sphere, as that person and work were historically inaugurated in the personal humanity which was manifested to the disciples in the days of our Lord's flesh. The true Church as Body of Christ might well be said to be *invisible*, in one respect—that is, it is an eternal and supernatural reality. But the use of this word *invisible*, and of other phrases which



amount to the same thing, brings about a difficulty which is found in the classical Protestant reformers.<sup>2</sup> It suggests or tends to suggest that the Church is a rather ethereal and indeed an *unreal*, because an *ideal*, organism, which touches the actual, hard, concrete world of our experience and the actual, empirical, Christian fellowship in that world, only tangentially. The *invisible* Church abides in the heavens; it has but a loose connection with the Church here below. But such a dualism or dichotomy we cannot allow. On the contrary, what we must boldly assert, following the line of thought which the Incarnation itself boldly asserts, is that the Church is twofold in nature. It is *both* supernatural *and* natural. That is, it has an eternal, divine reality, but it also has an empirical, historical, and therefore necessarily limited, reality; and these two are bound together—as are the divine and human natures of God incarnate—not accidentally nor incidentally, but essentially and really. The union of the natural and supernatural in the Church, in this respect, is like the union of the divine and the human in its Lord; it is unconfused, unchanged, indivisible, and inseparable—to employ the famous *Chalcedonian adverbs*.<sup>3</sup>

From the other, and strictly *common sense*, point of view, the split in the Church as an empirical institution in this world is the consequence of human sin, error, and weakness. It is what might be expected if the eternal reality of the Church is to be so closely associated with, in fact united with, the historical *conditionedness* of a community of men and women existing in the realm of space and time, without that guarantee of complete identity between eternal reality and empirical instrument which would result in a false—an almost Apollinarian, or even a monophysite<sup>4</sup>—doctrine of the Church. The Church must remain human, in that it is in this world and composed, in this

world, of human beings; even while it is also divine, in that it is Christ's Church and His Body. So it is that the Church is one and united, supernaturally and eternally, since Christ Himself is its Lord and Head. But so it is also, because men are themselves sinful, that the Church has the possibility of temporary empirical separation and apparent disunity. Men are not immediately made sinless by their incorporation into the mystical Body of Christ, by their becoming living members of it and partakers of its supernatural life. They *are* given what is often and properly called the seed of the supernatural life. Original sin, an unhappy term which denotes the even more unhappy fact of man's genuine spiritual insufficiency's leading to actual sin, is removed by baptism so that men do not have the liability of it; but concupiscence, a compendious and probably even more unhappy theological term which describes the desire and tendency that such a state of original sin has implanted in human nature, is not removed—so classical theology, with profound insight, has regularly asserted. And men have, therefore, that tendency to self-will, that desire to have their own way, even when they are in the Church's fellowship, which leads to precisely such division and separation as the empirical Church manifests. It is regrettable, but none the less it is true, that man remains a sinner even as a Christian believer.

Yet, on the other hand, God, in creating this new community which is the Body of Christ, so linked it with Himself in the person of the eternal Word, that by reason of this union it is impossible for the Church ever to fall into complete and permanent defection from Him. It will recover; it is like a healthy organism which throws off disease. Historically, this process of recovery has been illustrated over and over again, from the days of the Ebionites and Gnostics, through the time

when (as St. Jerome said) "the world groaned to find itself Arian,"<sup>5</sup> to our present day when the return to an integral Christianity is working itself out in a demand for a more explicit and obvious unity of the Church through the so-called *ecumenical movement*. The Church, then, is *trustworthy*; it may be listened to with confidence when it declares that which is its central gospel, and it may be followed confidently when it leads in worship and speaks of the life in grace. This we shall discuss in a later chapter on authority. At the moment the point to be made is that the disunity of the Church, as an empirical institution, is to be explained because of the fact of human sin and not because the Church as Body of Christ is itself divided. It is one, as Christ himself is one; it is one, because the Church in this world is not simply the temporary empirical *manifestation* of the supernatural Church, but is itself the supernatural Church on its human, natural, and empirical side.

So much for our point that the true nature of the Church is a supernatural unity which cannot be rent asunder, since man even in his worst sin cannot break God's will in "an eternal fashion." We may now proceed to a consideration of the actual this-worldly unity of the Church, as it may be expressed empirically in the institutional organism which is here in this world and obvious to the eyes of men. That unity, we have seen, is a genuine reality in that Christians of varying kinds do in fact maintain the same faith, worship the same God, and live the same supernatural life in grace through fellowship in the Holy Spirit. But is this all that can be said, leaving the entire conception vague and undefined?

Clearly this is not true, since there are vast differences even in the ways in which this empirical unity is expressed. Hence there is forced upon us the necessity for some due reckoning



with the modes of statement of the Church's unity. The picture which will most satisfactorily represent this in our thinking might very well be a series of concentric circles. In this series, there are arrows pointing in toward the common center. This common center is the historic Jesus Christ, God-Man, worshiped in sacrament, lived in the supernatural life in grace, whose significance is stated in dogmatic belief—with all of the implications, explications, and applications of this center that may be historically observable. We must bear this series of circles in mind in our future discussion of the varying types of Christian thought and experience. We have already spoken of the religious bodies which may be said to belong to "the mainstream of historic Christianity"; our meaning was that unquestionably there are groups which have consistently maintained the normal, historical expression of the given faith, in articulated dogma, in sacrament, and in life, and have also consistently maintained the ordered ministry that has developed through the long ages of the Church's empirical existence. In our symbolic picture, these groups are closest to the common center of the series of circles. As one moves out from the center, however, one finds that other groups, with varying emphases, maintain one or another of the historical modes of expression of the given tradition—some stressing certain aspects of dogma, others weaker in this respect yet emphasizing important elements in Christian moral life or devotion; and still others acutely conscious of the liturgical sense but less strong in some other respects, etc.

It is to be observed, however, in line with our argument in the preceding chapter, that as the groups which belong in the outer rings of the series of circles weaken in their maintenance of some one aspect of the tradition, they *tend* to weaken in

the others. If their position on the dogmatic essence of Christianity is vague or uncertain, let us say, they often tend also to weaken in their stress on Christian worship as that has been historically understood, and in their notion of Christian living tend often to identify Christianity with mere *following* of the moral leadership of Jesus. This in turn may become weakened for lack of the strong supernatural element, and so, in the end, the Christian ethic may become a purely humanistic, or even a frankly naturalistic, ethic. It would be invidious to cite historical illustrations of this tendency; but it is our observation of the facts of Church history which makes the statement merely a statement of the truth. The same kind of comment may be made about the bodies which have a weakened version of the historical, sacramental worship of the Church; they tend to lower the faith and eventually to weaken in the moral emphasis. Likewise, bodies which have lost the high, devotional stress have wobbled in their liturgical and dogmatic witness, while a badly lowered moral strain has had its result in other areas. In general, then, it is true that worship, faith, and life go together in the Christian complex; and, as we have seen and shall see again, mutual interaction of these elements is unavoidable, not only in the life of the individual believer, but also in the total witness of the religious community to which he may belong. It is for this reason that it is imperative to maintain the fullest stress on *all* of the elements which belong to the unity of the Church's being.

This is true not only of worship, dogma, and life; it is true also of the *ministerial* aspect of the Church's being. Here it is the plain lesson of history that when the apostolic ministry is disregarded unfortunate results follow. When a group of Christians entertains a lowered conception of the ministry, or

provides for the effectual expression of the ministry an office which minimizes historical continuity or has lost the externalized statement of that continuity by means of some authentication both by duration of time and by extent of space (that is, by historical consent and by general present-day acceptance as a *recognized* ministry of the Church's unity)—when either one of these things occurs, the witness of the group to the historical Christian faith is likely to be less vivid and clear, in the long run, than it might well be. Once again, particular historical examples could be cited; but, once again, that would be invidious, and for verification of this point the reader may well ponder Church history for himself.

The symbolic picture of the Church's unity which we chose above was a series of concentric circles. Let us take another. The Church's unity is not unlike the unity of a large city with its surrounding suburban communities. The heart of the matter—the city itself, with the fullness of life therein—is to be found where there is actual empirical unity by agreement in the historic dogma, worship, life, and ministry. In the suburban communities, however, there are many elements important to city life. But in these suburbs (one hopes that residents, geographically, in such communities will bear this comment with equanimity!) the elements of city life are lacking that unifying and central element which would give them their due balance and proportion. Perhaps that is why residents in the suburbs so often gravitate toward the heart of the city, for so many reasons and on so many occasions—and almost always, be it noted, for business. The metaphor is poor, but it may at least suggest that there are degrees of expression or manifestation of a unity which is supernatural and real, which is least inadequately expressed when there is a genuine agreement with historical



continuity and amongst those who profess the Christian way, at the same time that there are shadings-off in one respect or another. The unity, on the one hand, cannot be broken in eternal regard; on the other hand, it can fail to be adequately and equally expressed in empirical manner. And in any event, it is never *fully* obvious in this world, any more than the full deity of the incarnate God was *fully* (that is, completely and without remainder) expressed through the humanity which He assumed for His own.

It is equally important, however, that we should be quite clear that such failure to express whatever degree of visible unity the Church may be able to manifest as the reflection of its supernatural unity is a very dangerous and unworthy matter. The notion that the visible Church may be divided into as many separate and separated groups as you please, while the "invisible" Church remains quite united and untouched, has in it the fallacy that it suggests far too loose a view of the relation of the empirical to the supernatural. The supernatural Church *requires* for its expression the empirical Church. In this world, there is no other embodiment of the eternal, supernatural Church which is the Body of Christ than the institutional, empirical expression which we call the Holy Catholic Church, the Church militant in earth, the Christian fellowship. And when, through the sin of its human members, the work of the Church as Body of Christ is impeded, it is an appalling thing. The empirical manifestation of the supernatural unity of the Church is God's intention. And by the sin of schism, we must admit with shame and contrition, the actual continuing of the Incarnation and the Atonement in this world, through the Church which as the Body of Christ is His social humanity, is delayed and its

accomplishment made the more difficult. No Christian can contemplate such a fact with equanimity.

We now must attempt to see *how* the Church's supernatural and essential unity is to be expressed in the empirical Church, and we must also consider the way in which the greatest degree of empirical approximation to that genuine unity may be determined. In fact, these two are really the same question.

The Church's unity, first of all, is to be expressed externally and empirically by a common consent to the historical faith, historical worship, and historical life-in-love of the Christian community, as these have been preserved, renewed, and manifested through the centuries. The external and empirical guarantee of such a loyal expression of the unity of the Church is the ordered ministry by which the Church as an institution has in fact been continued. This ministry, as we shall argue later, is not simply the ministry of the ordained clergy; it is also the ministry of the whole laity, "the people of God," whose genuine priesthood as participants in the extended priesthood of Christ has been asserted from primitive Christian times as the fundamental *substratum* of any other particular priesthood which may necessarily be delegated by the Body of Christ to particular officiating ministers.<sup>6</sup> In any case the notion that the ordered ministry is not essential to the Church, or the parallel notion that the mode of the ordered ministry is a matter of indifference, would implicitly deny the one-way character of the whole historical process in that it is an attempt to ignore, neglect, go behind or "go back on" the historical development which has marked the Church's life. It is also an attempt—very often, of course, unconsciously made—to deny that the Holy Spirit has been at work in guiding the Church toward such institutional means of maintaining and affirming the faith, wor-

ship, and life which are its treasure, as shall the most effectively preserve and satisfactorily continue their maintenance down the ages. Put the other way around, it is reasonable on these grounds to assert that the Church groups which maintain the historical faith, worship, and life of the Church, and also maintain (as their external guarantee) the historical and apostolic ministry that has been the recognized (and thereby, the authenticated) ministry of the Church from early days, will be the groups that may properly claim to exhibit the most intimate and genuine empirical unity. These groups, in the phrase which we have previously employed for our purpose, can be described as of "the mainstream of historic Christianity."

Other groups, which in one way or another have departed from that historic path, are not thereby removed, however, from all participation in the Church's unity. To affirm that they are would be to fly in the face of the facts of spiritual life, faith in God's act in Christ, adoration of the Lord Jesus, and obvious receiving of divine grace through membership in such groups. They cannot be *unchurched*. Rather, it may be said, they are not adequately *churched*. By this we mean simply, and with all charity, that they have failed to come into the full historic unity of the Church, as this may be empirically expressed, by reason of their failure to come in to the full and indispensable historical expression of that unity.

These other groups have so acted for reasons which are historically understandable. But their failure to recognize the fact, when it is patent, or their unwillingness to take such steps as may once more bring them more closely into union with the historically continuous communions, is of the nature of schism—whether the schism be formal or material or both. In point of actual fact, there can be little doubt that most of



the reasons for such refusal to return to *the innermost circle* of unity are reasons that are not very weighty at the present moment, although it must also be admitted that on both sides there are long-standing differences, prejudices, and many other factors of a psychological or sociological nature which contribute to their refusal and deserve and must receive due recognition and sympathetic consideration.

If one wishes, then, to discover among the various Christian communions the approximation that is closest to the adequate empirical expression of the true unity of the Church as the supernatural Body of Christ, one will ask questions such as the following: Does this group actually profess and in fact maintain the historic faith in the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, or, in brief, in the general dogmatic position conveniently stated in the three creeds (Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian) and formulated in the great theologies of the undivided Church? Does this group actually maintain the worship of God in Christ through the sacrament of the Eucharist, in which centrally, significantly, and by the vast majority of Christians for two thousand years, God in Christ has in fact been adored and His gift of Himself in Christ received by those who, through the Sacrament of Baptism, have been incorporated into His Body the Church? Does this group actually maintain and regularly employ such means of grace, such habits of devotion and discipline, as produce the fruits of the Spirit in lives that are fragrant with the varied supernatural gifts of love, joy, peace, faith, hope, courage—lives that are truly *en-Christed*? Does this group have that continuity of ministerial order which has been known from the primitive days of the Christian community, and has (through the long centuries since that time) been the mark and guaran-

tee, in the Christian community, of trustworthiness of faith, worship, and life? Does this group, to put it more briefly, give to the believer the assurance that he is actually incorporated into and that he accepts and shares the *given* Christian tradition; that he shares the given tradition, and not an ephemeral, even purely individual or idiosyncratic notion of what Christianity (in the opinion of some small group or perhaps of some one man) might be or ought to be, and not what in fact it has historically shown itself and been shown to be?

In summary, we may say that (*a*) the Nicene Creed, with the other creeds which go with it; (*b*) the Eucharist as central Christian act of worship, with baptism (normally completed by confirmation) as the sacramental means of initiation into the Church; (*c*) the insistence that there is a distinctive quality of life which can be known as *Christian*, in which the sacramental exercise of absolution by the priesthood is a part, and the persisting production of that life in the saints and in others who, if not saints in the modern sense, are at least "holy and humble men of heart"; and (*d*) the ordered ministry, which has been articulated in the Church's development into the threefold grouping of bishop, priest, and deacon—these four will be the marks of the Church, so far as its measure of empirical expression of that unity which is its supernatural reality is concerned. And although one or other of these marks may for a time be carelessly neglected, they can never be intentionally departed from, by a group claiming to partake in the unity of the Church, without involving that group in schism from the unity.

Such a summary is closely parallel to the so-called Lambeth Quadrilateral,<sup>7</sup> omitting only the reference in that Quadrilateral to the Holy Scriptures, and adding the reference to penance

and holiness of life in grace. But the Holy Scriptures are not in fact omitted from our summary. Instead, they are now seen in their proper context, for they are included in the total picture, since they are (a) the historical statement of the manner in which this Christian tradition actually was inaugurated in the world; (b) part of the historical tradition itself and therefore integral to it and central in it as determinative of the essence of "the Christian Thing," in Mr. Chesterton's phrase;<sup>8</sup> and (c) the continuing means of awakening, through meditative reading and study, the same response to God in his revelation to men as that which historically marked those to whom the revelation came in the days of which the Old and the New Testament are, in whatever sense, the record. Hence the Scriptures are involved in each of the several points which we have noted as the marks of the Church in respect to its empirical expression of its supernatural unity, while the Sacrament of Absolution or Penance is also involved in the persistence of and restoration to the divine life given in membership in the Body of Christ.

In one of the most stimulating of recent studies of the question of Christian reunion, Canon Broomfield<sup>9</sup> has suggested that it is only as a historical tradition, with a manifold and varied expression, that Christianity can properly be understood. It is, he points out, a tradition of response to the revelation of God in Christ; and part of that response is what may be called (by us, and not by Canon Broomfield) the *ministerial articulation*, as well as the regularly accepted expression in dogmatic statement, in sacramental worship, and in the supernatural love and obedient service which mark the life of the Christian believer. Canon Broomfield's insistence seems to us to be of first importance. It is in fact true that *without* the ordered



ministry the likelihood is that the Christian tradition would have been vague and amorphous, unable to survive the vicissitudes of history. *With* the ordered ministry, the tradition has the continuity and the durability that are guaranteed the human body by its skeletal structure. For this reason we have maintained in this chapter that the ordered ministry is as much part of the empirical unity of the Church as is the Christian faith itself. This would not be exactly true, if by the statement it were to be understood that we were suggesting that the faith did not come first and the ministry come afterward as guarantee and guard. But this order is not the only point to be stressed. The faith and all that goes with it did and does come first; but we are prepared to maintain that the response in ministry is so integral to that faith that without the ministry the faith is imperiled.

Here again, as at the conclusion of the previous chapter, let it be carefully noted that we have not suggested that the Church may not develop, move ahead, grow. On the contrary, it is our main contention that the Christian tradition has a long future of expansion before it, not only in numbers of believers and areas where the Church may have a widening influence, but also in the deepening understanding and enlarged interpretation of the faith itself. Certainly there will be such a deepening understanding, even modification in *interpretation*, as the years go by and the Christian Church continues to ponder the revelation of God in Christ and learns more and more of its truth. Certainly the underlying intention of some of the articles of the historic creeds may be made clearer, and even restated, in the light of more profound penetration and through the growth of our knowledge: the immediately obvious or merely superficial meanings may be seen to be what they are. Cer-

tainly, the sacramental worship of the Church may take on deeper significance, and there may be alterations in actual expression, with new stress and emphasis and broader implications. Certainly the application of Christian life in holiness and charity will develop, with its extension to ever widening areas of life and experience, both in the personal and in the social realms. So it is also that the ordered ministry may be expanded and developed, and new ideas or emphases which are congruous with its historical nature may be introduced. All this is to be both expected and welcomed.

It is, indeed, precisely this kind of development that must take place if the Church is truly guided and informed, in its organic life, by the operation of the Holy Spirit. And all this will not imperil or deny the unity of the Church, either with its own past or with its divine-human Lord or with that supernatural unity which is the Body of Christ. This continuity in unity will indeed be the better maintained if there is such growth and expansion and dynamic life. But this will be true only and always as it is a line of advance actually of a piece with the continuity and unity already established and not a denial of it. Furthermore, such growth is valid only as long as it is a movement *ahead*, and does not deteriorate into a perhaps well-intentioned but nevertheless misguided attempt to *go back* of the Church's accomplished and accepted decisions. Such false growth, (in reality retrogression rather than growth) which for example would deny the Chalcedonian definition of the person of Christ in order to go back to some Arian, Eutychian, or other inadequate pre-Chalcedonian view of that person; or, to take another instance, would wish the return to some supposedly primitive ministerial expression which, within a few decades after the Church's foundation (at most

eight or ten) had become abnormal and special, rather than normal and regular<sup>10</sup>—would be a denial of the Church's historical understanding of its nature.

So the unity of the Church is both *inward* toward the center of our series of circles—that is, toward the central emphases in dogma, worship, life, and ministry which are at present to be found in communions that have maintained marked historical continuity; and *outward* from that center, in increasing expression of the center in all areas of life. It is also *upward* and *downward*; it is a movement toward and from the supernatural unity of the Church as the Body of Christ, a unity which cannot be broken, with which the empirical Church is at one, even though it has tragically failed to express in the world the completeness of the unity which it always knows *in faith* and toward which its struggles here in this world are always to be directed. The Church is one; therefore our task is to work for, and, under God and in accord with His historical disclosure of Himself through the community of the Holy Spirit, to achieve through Him that actual empirical expression in institutional embodiment which shall most certainly make known to the world that we are one, even as He and His Father are one.



### Chapter III

## THE HOLINESS OF THE CHURCH

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### THE CHURCH IS HOLY.

Through an unfortunate misunderstanding, the English reformers omitted the word *holy* from their translation of the Nicene Creed into English in the First Prayer Book of Edward VI, in 1549. Copying from this book, many of the prayer books of other branches of the Anglican Communion have also omitted the word. But in all classical theology, *holiness* appears regularly as one of the four important notes of the Church; and it is likely that, so far as the American branch of the Anglican Communion is concerned, the actual word *holy* will be inserted once more in the Nicene Creed, in its proper place, at the next revision of the Prayer Book, so that (with the rest of Catholic Christendom) we shall again profess, as we ought, our belief in "one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church." Already this change has been accomplished in the Scottish Liturgy, as well as in other Anglican Churches in some of the dominions and colonies of the British Commonwealth; and in the English "Deposited" Book (prepared for adoption in 1928, although rejected by Parliament and hence not *authorized* for use in the Established Church of England) the insertion was also made. Certainly we should desire the traditional description of the Church, as found in all of the other historical liturgies of the Eastern and Western Churches, to be used also throughout the Anglican Communion.

What is the meaning of the assertion that the Christian

Church is marked by the note of holiness? Like the assertion of the Church's unity, it is fairly obvious to the superficial observer and a cause of shame to the devout believer, that the Church of Christ, as empirically established in this world, has very often been much less than properly holy, in the conventional sense of that word. The Church has been marked, clearly enough, by the sinfulness of its members; often enough it has seemed to be in defection—and serious defection—from that quality of life which it desiderates among those "who profess and call themselves Christian." This is a ghastly tragedy, and no one wishes to condone it. In fact, it is imperative that the defection be fully recognized, truly repented of, and the remedy sought. There is nothing whatever to be said for delusion on this point. On the other hand, it is extremely important to understand the proper historical meaning of the term *holy*. And for those who have come to the conclusion that the Church, even in its empirical reality, is the Body of Christ for this world, the belief in the church's holiness must rest back on and express something more fundamental, indeed something other than, the ideally perfect moral quality which, it is hoped, may be shown in the personal lives of its members, or than the ideal perfection which should be seen in its institutional and hierarchical activities.

Help is given to us at this point from a consideration of the truth that the same term which is used to describe the Christian Church is also applied in the Old Testament to the Jewish nation and people.<sup>1</sup> The chosen people, it is said over and over again, are a *holy people*. Jahweh is represented as speaking to them, not once but many times, saying to them through His prophets that they are holy, even as He is holy. They are, in other words, *His people*; and it is in that sense

that they are holy. Furthermore, a careful study of the use of the term as applied to Jahweh Himself, especially in the oracles of such a prophet as Isaiah, would appear to make it plain beyond any possibility of doubt that moral perfection is not the root-meaning of the word, but something much more fundamental. Rudolf Otto, in his *Idea of the Holy*, has shown that, while the word does of course possess deep ethical implications, yet, long before the ethical quality, it suggests another quality—namely, the separateness, the wonderful exaltation and consecration which attaches to objects or to persons that are so closely related to the majesty, the supreme grandeur, and the high splendor of God himself that they share, in some genuine way, in that same majesty, grandeur, and splendor.

To be holy, as this is said of Jahweh, means that the God who is "the holy One of Israel" is "high and lifted up"; He is, paradoxically enough, both separated from the world which He has created and also strangely related to it, in such fashion that while He attracts it to Himself by the very majesty which is His, He also repels it from too close association with Him, since His wonder and glory are far beyond and above any human comprehension. Moses is told to take off his shoes, because he stands on ground which is holy ground in that it is the place of *God's* manifestation. Mount Sinai is a holy place, and its height is covered with a cloud, because here the utter sublimity and transcendent majesty of the God of Hosts is revealed to men. No man can see God and live, for His holiness is like a fire which consumes all that is exposed to His terrible reality. Man can see of God only that which He is willing, of his own condescension, to reveal to man—His *hinderparts*, His *revealed* nature and will. God's *shekinah*, the



cloud which hides Him, also reveals Him; and yet, through it all, God in Himself is different, He is separated from, His world; God is in a special and unique category.

But if God Himself is like this, the Jewish nation is holy, too. It has, by Jahweh's own act, by His particular choice, been separated to Him; hence it is holy, as His own special people. The Jewish nation was called out by God from among the other nations of the earth; it was by that act separated unto Him and consecrated by Him for a special purpose. It is not to be identified with nor is it in the same category as the other peoples and nations which "know not God." Its mission, on the one hand, is to preserve its true and intimate relation to Jahweh, as His peculiar people; on the other hand, it is to bring the God, who is the God of the Jews since He has chosen them, to other men, to the end that (as long prophetic insight and meditation at length made clear to the Jewish Church) the unique quality which is "the glory of His people Israel" may also be known as "the light to lighten the Gentiles." For God's glory, and, by reflection, the glory of His chosen people, is not sheer mystery; it is, rather, an excess of light, and by such excess of light are men blinded even while they are attracted to it. Men stumble on the way, but they are drawn none the less; they fall in adoration of the wonder that is before them, and manifested to them, in the God of Israel and through the people whom He has chosen.

The holiness of the Christian Church is to be understood in the sense in which the term was applied to the old Israel. The Church, as we have already seen, can itself be understood only as we see it to be the reconstitution of Israel on the foundation stone of the Messiah Jesus—who, for developed Christian faith, is God-made-man. And the holiness which appertained

to the old Israel, Israel after the flesh, is now the holiness which in renewed might appertains to the new Israel, Israel after the Spirit. Therefore, as the holiness of the old Israel could be affirmed by the ancient prophets even while they denounced with unparalleled vigour the awful sin of the Jewish people, so the holiness of the Christian Church, which is the new Israel and the Body of Christ, can be affirmed, even while the sin of the members of that new Israel must be recognized and denounced.

The concept of holiness, then, is not a merely ethical notion. Yet in saying this, it is also to be added that in the degree to which the Christian Church realizes its true function as the Body of Christ, even the empirical Christian community in this world will be increasingly filled with the divine power, energy—in a word, holiness—and will, in consequence, as we shall have occasion to say later, more adequately manifest in its own life and to the world the ethical quality which includes a divine charity, purity, and righteousness.

But the Church's fundamental holiness is made possible only because the Church, as the Body of Christ, is the new Israel *after the Spirit*. It is necessary to grasp the point, often forgotten by *liberal* writers of the old school, that when St. Paul and others speak of the Spirit in this and other connections, they are not referring to any vague idealism or spirituality or to what we may well call "the spirit of religion." They are referring here, as is St. Paul when he happens to make certain remarks about "the Spirit that giveth life," to the *Holy Spirit*. They mean that Spirit who indwells the Christian community, who is "Lord and Life-giver," who is known in the fellowship which is the Church; but by that Spirit they mean also the selfsame Spirit who is defined theologically in later

Christian dogma as the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, "who spake by the prophets," who in the Word incarnate was given "without measure."

The Church, therefore, is holy as the fellowship of Holy Spirit. This is no place to enter upon a detailed statement of the traditional Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit; in another place, the writer has endeavored to discuss this subject with due attention to the whole question of Trinitarian theology.<sup>2</sup> Here it must suffice to say only that God the Holy Spirit, as understood in the traditional Christian theology, is *God in His responsive movement*, the great *Amen*.<sup>3</sup> In *economic* terms, by which we mean what He *does* in relation to the world, the Holy Spirit is God as He operates in conforming the world and men to His outward movement or self-expression (the eternal Word) in the world which is created and sustained by that same self-expressive *Activity*, who is the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. As through the entire created order, there is this responsive and conforming movement *through* the world *to* God as Word moving out to create, reveal, redeem, and manifest Himself, so in the Christian community, where the supreme act of God incarnate in the Lord Jesus is known and apprehended, there is also the supreme returning movement of response and conformity to the redemptive revelation. In terms of religious experience, that is to say that God in Christ is met by God the Holy Spirit. And the Church's true life, which is life in God, is the life of responsive action to the outward-moving act of God culminating in the person of Jesus Christ the God-Man. More simply put, God responds through the life of the divine community to God-in-a-human-life. This is how it is possible for Christian spiritual writers, and theologians after them, to speak of the



way in which the Trinity dwells in the believer and the believer shares in the very movement of life in the Trinity.<sup>4</sup>

The Church, therefore, is only properly known in its integrity when it is seen as the Spirit-informed divine community. As we have already indicated, it is part of Christian belief that the Church did not come into existence through any act of man alone. It is the divine creation. As in all divine creation God the Father through the Son and by the Holy Spirit is active, so the Christian Church—the new Israel which is the Body of Christ—is created by God the Father as he sends His Son incarnate in man's humanity and awakens through the Holy Spirit the life of the community, whose response of love, of worship, and of service is of such a nature that no man nor group of men alone can have performed it—the Church is the work of God the Holy Ghost. Here the analogy with the Incarnation itself is clear. In that dogma, God the Father sends the Son who is born of a woman, the Blessed Virgin Mary, by the Holy Ghost. The divine initiative comes first; but it is the humanly given, although divinely prepared and guided, response which makes the act of Incarnation a possibility.<sup>5</sup> Yet it is divinely prepared *and* divinely guided *and* divinely informed. Here is the complex picture, without either side of which the story is quite incomplete and indeed wrong. The same is true of the Church: the divine initiative in the act of God in Christ comes first, then the responsive movement which is human and yet is so divinely prepared, guided, and informed that it is more profoundly described as the movement of the Holy Spirit through the community which the divine initiating act calls into being.

The Spirit-informed Church is the Body of Christ. It is this same Spirit-informed Church which is embodied in our tem-

poral-spatial order in the empirical institution. Hence the Holy Spirit is moving in and through the empirical institution, conforming it so far as the free consent of men will permit to that disclosure of God in Christ which is the continuing work of the Body and its hidden life. This conforming, in the present world, is the ground for asserting that the Church is the *special* channel for God's further working in the process of the social development of the Incarnation and the Atonement. It is not, of course, the exclusive channel for this work among men, since it is part of the faith as well as the deliverance both of common sense and observation that wherever there is any such response to God there is some measure of Spirit, be that measure slight or great. But it is because Christ is the Word of God made man that in Him, as St. John has put it, the Spirit is given "without measure"; and it is because the Church, both in its supernatural reality and in its empirical reality, is the Body of Christ which socially extends His humanity, that the Spirit overflows, as it were, into the world through that Church in a unique and special manner.

The established sacraments of the Church, as well as the essential functioning of the Church's life through its ordered ministry, can only be seen properly when they are seen as related in such a fashion to the Spirit-informed community as shall make them the work of the Spirit. All of the sacraments of the Catholic Church are "by the operation of the Holy Ghost," and have neither significance nor value apart from this truth. The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, by which admission is given into the fellowship of the Church and the candidate is made "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven," is performed by a priest (or deacon, in necessity, or even by a layman *in extremis*,) but

it is effectual only in that it is performed by the power of the Holy Spirit and imparts His presence and aid. Confirmation, by which the Christian attains to fully responsible participation in the life of the Church, is given to make the Holy Spirit's gifts more widely operative in the believer. The Holy Eucharist is offered to God as a holy sacrifice which represents the sacrifice of Calvary, but it is offered by the invocation of the Holy Spirit; and the consecration of the sacred elements, by which bread and wine are so converted that they become the true body and blood of the God-Man, is by the action of the Holy Spirit in response to the Church's prayer. This is true whether the consecration be effected, as is taught in the western Church, by the use of the so-called *words of institution*; or is brought about, as the eastern Church teaches, by the actual verbal invocation of the Holy Spirit Himself who descends upon the elements in answer to this invocatory prayer; or is realized, as is perhaps the best theory of consecration, by the total act of consecratory prayer, including normally our Lord's words and also an invocation of the Holy Spirit, as well as the eucharistic note of thanksgiving which was so stressed in the primitive church. In the Sacrament of Holy Order, the grace of orders is bestowed as the Spirit rests upon chosen men and by His gracious work makes them the instruments for the functional representation of the Church as the Spirit-informed Body of Christ. It is similar with each of the other sacraments, Penance or Absolution, Marriage, and Holy Unction.<sup>6</sup>

Immediately we have granted such a conception of the Church and its peculiar holiness, the *ethical* aspect of that holiness is recognized as an inevitable corollary and consequence. The Church which is the Body of Christ and which, as such, is informed by the Holy Spirit, is intended by God to show "the



fruits of the Spirit" which were manifested in the historical life of Jesus himself. It is to exhibit love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, meekness, self-control, both in the lives of its particular members and in its corporate activity. These ethical qualities certainly are of the essence of the Church's life. But chiefly the special virtues, faith, hope, and charity, mentioned by St. Paul in I Corinthians 13 and later defined by the Church as *the theological virtues* because they are uniquely and specially God-given, are the habits of behavior (for that is what a virtue means) which in God's purpose are to be the marks of the Church. This is true not merely when the Church is conceived of as the eternal and supernatural Body of Christ, but also when it is seen on its this-worldly side as the empirical embodiment of that supernatural reality in this world.

The task of the Church, in part, is to mediate these gifts of the Spirit to men, and to manifest in its own institutional life the same qualities, in such wise that all will note them and desire them. The Holy Spirit who moves through the Christian fellowship is to be given such free play as shall permit the infusion of these virtues, these habits of good behavior, into the individual members of the divine fellowship; and He is also to be given free play to infuse the same virtues into the institutional behavior of the Church itself, so that it shall be saved from mere *institutionalism* and *organizationalism* and be more in obvious fact that which it truly is: the Body of Christ, the divine organism in which the act of God in Christ meets the free response of the Holy Spirit.

But the fruits of the Spirit are not only to be manifested in the lives of the individual members of the Church and in the institutional activity of the Church. The Church, as the organism which is by definition fellowship in Holy Spirit, is *to make holy*

—that is, to consecrate—all things, all men and their entire life in the world, to God and to His holy service. This it can do only by being itself the channel of the divine love and power; but this it *must* do, none the less, if it is to be itself and true to its integral nature as the Spirit-informed Body of Christ, institutionally embodied in the world of space and time to carry on his work and make his presence known for succeeding generations of men, so long as the world shall endure.

Hence any introverted understanding of the Church's holiness is at once precluded. The Church's holiness, like God's holiness—of which it is both participation and reflection—is an outward-moving holiness. It is attractive and it is active. The canonized or recognized saints of the Christian Church have always been those who as the result of their lives have made a genuine difference in the world. And these saints are the "types" of the particular quality of holiness which is intended in God's purpose to mark all Christians called, by reason of their place as members of the holy community, to be holy and, therefore, to be, already, saints-in-embryo. No Christian saints, in the great central tradition of Christian sanctity, have been of the kind often called *absorptionist*,<sup>7</sup> familiar to us in Indian religion and among neo-Platonists. In Christian mysticism there is no "flight of the alone to the Alone"; even in the great contemplative mystics, there is always to be found an outward-moving quality. Of this such a Christian hero as St. John of the Cross<sup>8</sup> is a magnificent example. God was to be known and loved, this Spanish mystic taught, for His own sake; but because God was known and loved, there was a rich overflow of love toward men. When Christian sanctity becomes concerned with the cultivation of the spiritual self for its own sake and not for God's sake, it becomes unhealthy and is no longer

properly called Christian. And when it is cultivated for God's sake, its immediate result is growth in charity toward men. In fact, it may be said—with due reservations and qualifications, of course—that a spiritual life which is cultivated for its own sake is never really cultivated at all. We may here contrast, as did Mr. Chesterton,<sup>9</sup> the conventional image or picture of the Buddha, who, with all of his gentleness and humility was yet introverted and in search of rest for himself (and even if this be not true of the historic figure, it is most certainly true of the popular representations of him,) with the Christian saint who is so filled with the love of God that through him as through a sluice-gate it flows out to sweeten and lighten a sour and dark world.

The Holy Spirit who informs the Church and by that informing conforms it to the mind of Christ is also the guarantee of the Church's dynamic quality, to which we have so frequently drawn attention. In a later place, we shall have occasion to discuss at some length the question of the Church's development and growth, a subject already touched upon in our preceding chapters. Catholicism is not static; it is alive, as an organism is alive, and its life is made possible by the constant interaction of the eternal act of God in the living Christ and the responsive action of the Holy Spirit. In the matter of dogmatic definition, for example, the Church's teaching is final only because it is made by the work of the Holy Spirit to be everlastingly fertile. The threefold test to which we shall refer presently—the test (*a*) preservation of historic type; (*b*) ability to assimilate new material and adapt it to the constant factor; (*c*) capacity for maintaining persistence in vigour and vitality without loss of essential nature—may be applied to the development of the Church's dogma, worship, supernatural life in Christ, and



holy order; but, in each instance, it is the Spirit who secures that this test shall not fail either of application or of satisfaction.

If it were not for the guidance of the Church in this fashion by the Holy Spirit and the informing of the fellowship by the same Spirit in its every area, the Christian tradition would not merely be static. It would be legalistic, rigid, indeed dead. Unhappily, some pictures which have been painted of the Christian tradition seem to suggest precisely such a mechanical conception. There is no rich life in them; to all intents and purposes they are without genuine life at all—hence, without meaning in any significant sense. But such pictures are in no way true to that amazing sketch of the free movement of God's Holy Spirit which we find in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>10</sup> Those who paint these lifeless images may—probably do—have a most commendable interest in maintaining the true *type* of Christianity; but this interest, unfortunately, has led them to forget that the type can be maintained only by growth in a world which is constantly changing and developing. To stay still is to die. Cardinal Newman put this truth, in words that are almost too strong, when he said that while in another world it may be otherwise, in this world to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.<sup>11</sup> His meaning must be safeguarded by such an insistence on the preservation of type as is suggested in the canon of St. Vincent of Lerins. It could be better stated in the four admirable words of that writer, which we have had occasion to quote earlier, *non nova sed nove*—not new things so much as in a new way; that is, there can be a constant adaptation of the eternal facts and truths of the Christian type to the new situations in which it finds itself. This is to be welcomed. Likewise, there can be something more, continued new insight into the type and its meaning, in all of

their richness and wonder, since it is a type which is in fact nothing other than God Himself, made man for men.

The meaning of the holiness of the Church, in all of its rich articulation, has, like the meaning of the organic nature of the Church, been grasped more satisfactorily, on the whole, by the theologians of the Eastern Orthodox Church than by those of the western communions. The tendency to a legalistic and ultra-institutionalist emphasis in the west has led to an undervaluing, and in some instances to an almost complete neglect, of the vitalistic element in the notion of holiness. It is the vitalistic, the deeply organic, quality of the Church's life which, by its close relationship to the energizing holiness of God, has made clear the Spirit-infusion which is of the very essence of the primitive conception of the Church and is fundamental to Catholic Christianity. Although the Church is separated from the world and can never be conformed to the world or to a worldly pattern, it is not dead nor static while the world is moving and changing. Rather, because it is God's life which so uniquely informs the Church as fellowship of Holy Spirit, it is all the more alive, its institutional forms and hierarchical pattern filled with the divine energy and used for divine purposes. In the empirical Church there should be such a variety and wealth of possibilities in true living as can be found nowhere else.

Our last point, in this chapter, must be concerned with the Church's genuine difference from the world. One of the insistent problems of our time is the finding of a way in which satisfactorily to maintain this difference, without minimizing or neglecting the extra-ecclesiastical world and its intimate relation to the divine creativity and purpose. But certainly it is imperative to maintain that the Church is *substantial*; in its

own nature, it has a proper reality which is not dependent upon the world and its ways, and which is not adjectival to any national or international society or philosophy or order. This is part of the Church's essential holiness. On the other hand, if the Church is holy in the sense that it is not merely separated from the world but is also intended to permeate it and to conform it to God and his righteousness and love, it must be deeply implicated in the world and its affairs.

The only way in which there can be an approach to a solution of this perplexing problem, we would suggest, is by a recognition of the *amphibian* or bi-polar character of the Christian fellowship. In the world, but not of the world; with a citizenship in heaven, but with the given task of planting a colony of heaven in this mundane world—there is something of an answer. This approach to a solution in theory will doubtless involve many difficult practical problems, such as the relation of the Church to the national government or to the State, the relation of the Church to the agencies devoted to secular education, the attitude of the Church toward social evils, and the means of their overcoming, the position of the Church in regard to secular philosophies and cultures. But such problems can be worked out satisfactorily only when they are seen as inevitable problems, arising from the tension which must exist between the Church and the world, necessary to a community which while vitally concerned with and profoundly implicated in this world is yet not entirely confined to this world.

Someone has remarked, wisely, that as Christians all of us *are* in the world, but as Christians all of us *is* not in the world. This may be applied, equally well, to the Body of Christ which is the Holy Catholic Church. The Church is in the world, most deeply; but there is that in and of the Church which is not so



immersed. The Church has its own integral life, its own eternal reality, as the Holy Society. And this fact not only makes it "safe in God"; it also sends the Church out to make the whole world, so to say, "safe" for God's children, so far as that lies within the world's potentiality to be thus molded and changed.

## Chapter IV

### THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH

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#### THE CHURCH IS CATHOLIC.

George Tyrrell, the distinguished Jesuit spiritual writer and theologian whose excommunication by the Roman Church during the early years of the twentieth century was so tragic and in some ways so unfortunate, wrote in one of his letters that the word *catholic* was "music in his ears." He went on to explain that the reason was that whenever he thought of the Church as *catholic*, he thought at once of One on the Cross with arms spread wide, not for a selected few, but for the whole of the *orbis terrarum*.<sup>1</sup> That is a great saying, which for beauty and insight should long be remembered, coming from a man whose religious conviction was based on what he often termed "the faith of the millions"—the common testimony of the common man to a faith which gave dignity and significance to common life.

Generally, in recent years, much of the old feeling of prejudice which for various reasons good and bad had attached itself to that which may be called in a rough phrase the Catholic Idea, has broken down. There has been a return, on all sides and in some very surprising ways, to a concept of catholicity as fundamental to the Christian Church, as an essential element in Christianity—even though that concept be expressed, as often it is, either in terms that are different from, or by certain notions that are strange to, the accepted and traditional view of catholicity as it has been found in the mainstream of historical

Christianity. Such a returning interest and reviving emphasis must compel us to reexamine the whole idea of catholicity, which has always been one of the four notes of the Church in traditional theology.

Now the word *catholic*, like the word *holy*, as it occurs in the several creedal statements about the Church, may—indeed, must—be broken down into several different but related meanings. The Offices of Instruction in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer (our reference is to the Prayer Book of the American Church, in this instance) suggest several of these meanings which are to be found in the term *catholic*. Most of the suggested meanings are variants of the notion of universality, which is evidently taken as the primary significance of the Greek word *catholic*. But it would appear that there is an even deeper significance in *catholicity*, as it is asserted of the Church. For a recovery of this deeper sense of the word, we are largely indebted, once again, to the Greek and Russian Orthodox theology. And it is from this sense of the word that we shall begin our present discussion of the Church's catholicity.

For English-speaking Christians, the Eastern Orthodox conception is most conveniently stated in E. L. Mascall's fascinating symposium of Russian and British theologians, entitled *The Church of God*. It is developed, also, in larger works by individual Orthodox writers, more particularly by some of the Russian *émigré* theologians like Bulgakov; and it has found its expression also in the studies of the mystical life of the Church by Arseniev.<sup>2</sup> Briefly, this meaning of the term *catholic* rests back upon the actual Greek derivation of the word. It is clear that *catholic* comes from the Greek phrase καθ' ὅλου a combination of κατά and ὅλος. Literally, such a phrase must be translated into English as "according to the *allness* of the



thing." Or, in a less literal translation, we might say that it means "as regards its wholeness." The primary notion in the word, then, is the *altogetherness* or *wholeness* of life which appertains to the Church. *Integrity of being*—this is perhaps as close to the meaning of the Greek word as any short and readily understandable phrase that we can find in the English language. But this is precisely the idea which we have been seeking to present in earlier chapters of this book. The Church is an organic, integrated, mutually interdependent society. It is, in fact, a *body*. And we have already seen that such an understanding of the nature of the Church as the integrated Body of Christ, His social humanity, is not only the New Testament conception, but is also the one which must be accepted if we take very seriously—as we are bound to do—the particular functions which the Church performs in relation to the historic and risen Lord whom it both represents and expresses in the world through successive ages of its spatial-temporal existence.

If we take the primary meaning of *catholic*, therefore, as a denoting of the integrity of the Church's being, its mutual interrelatedness as an organism, we are prepared to advance considerably in our total picture of the essential nature of the Christian tradition. For it is at once seen that this tradition cannot be understood by Christian faith as an atomistic grouping of discrete realities, but must be grasped as a close-knit unity, in which the dogmatic element, the worship which flourishes at its center, the supernatural life in Christ, and the historical and ordered ministry, are so related each to the others that there is no possibility of separation without terrible mutilation of the Church itself. In an earlier chapter this point has already been made; but there is a further development of the idea which may well engage our attention here. Each member of

the Church, as and for himself, is part of the total integrity of the Church—so St. Paul has helped us to see, in his insistence that the suffering of one member harms the whole body of the Church. That which is true of any one member of the Church has its profound implications and results for the whole society of which he is a member. And contrariwise, that which is true of the whole society has its essential reflection in the individual member. Hence, as one who lives his life as a Christian *in* the Church, the member is also one who lives *with* the Church, even lives *as* the Church, worshiping with the Church, thinking and believing with the Church, and always acting as *of* the Church and not as of and for himself. He is, so to say, lost in the life of the Church, in order that he may be found with deepened and enriched personality as being *en-Christed* by his membership in the Body of Christ: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

On the other hand, the Church lives in its members—not *exhaustively*, because the Church has its own life which is the continued life of the incarnate God, but *intimately* and *effectually* in this world of space and time, where the spiritual reality of Christ the God-Man must be embodied in the members of His Body which is the Church. Here, in truth, is one of the vital elements in the sacramental life of the Christian—that Christ in His Church-Body may so be implanted, may so grow, may so be nourished, in the life of the individual member of the Church that He may be reflected in every act and thought of the member, who thus becomes, so to say, a *liturgical person*, one who is a publicly manifested *work* of God-in-Christ-in-the-Church.<sup>3</sup>

In I Corinthians, when St. Paul is discussing the significance of the Eucharist, he points out that those who receive holy

communion without "discerning the Lord's Body" only bring damnation upon themselves.<sup>4</sup> Is it stretching the point too far to expound this text as stating that those who participate even in the supreme act of Christian worship without that living in and living with the Church which is the negation of all *rugged individualism*, all utterly individualistic self-expression, are only making their own spiritual state the worse? For the truth would seem to be that it is when one becomes a member of the Church-Body and by integration into *its* integral life becomes a living part of its very being, that one realizes life in its fullness and is given, gradually and progressively, the grace to go on both in and toward salvation—that is, toward such adjustment to the ultimate reality of God that life is securely and soundly based and man's intended sonship to God is realized. And this is made possible because the Christian is of the catholicity of the Church, an integral member of a society which is integral in being.

The quality of life in such a community is the quality of charity. It is charity in the supernatural sense, since it is the charity which is the life of incarnate God Himself, bringing to men, in their human condition and in human terms, the unplumbed charity which is the life of unoriginate God himself. It is such charity, implanted germinally in the faithful at baptism as they become by that sacrament very members incorporate in the family of Christ, and growing stronger in them as they themselves grow in the family life of the Christian fellowship, which is the peculiar quality of Christianity. That love, realized in the intimacies of the Church's hidden life, is the actual presence in the world of Christ Himself, made possible by the informing of the Christian society which is the work of the Holy Spirit responding to the act of God in Christ. Otherwise, there



is nothing to distinguish the Christian Church from any organization or institution established, for mutual assistance or improvement or for cultivation of the ethical and religious life, by and for those who happen to be interested in that sort of thing.

Here the Russians, particularly, have much to teach us. Their conception of *soborny*, as the essence of Christianity, comes close to the heart of the matter. This "life-in-love which is community-in-Christ"—which certain Russian theologians<sup>5</sup> in private conversation with the writer have given as the meaning of *soborny*—would seem to be a most vital and vitalizing way of expressing the real *differentia* of Christianity. It is this which marks off the Catholic Church from all sectarian insistences and separations as *the great Church*. It is this which gives the Church its distinctive quality and establishes its peculiar function: the spreading through the whole world of that organic life in the God-Man which can take into itself all else that is good, true, and lovely, baptizing it into Christ and so preparing for the presentation to the Father of a redeemed cosmos, permeated by this life in God. Here, as the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians saw, is the goal of all creation: when all shall be in Christ, and in the heavenlies the eternal Word, with the creation which is united with Him, shall make the full offering of Himself to the Father, that God may be all in all.

Only when this primary meaning of the catholicity of the Church, as the integral society which is the Body of Christ destined to bring the entire creation back to God through Him by whom all things were made, has been properly stressed, can we move on to the other points which need consideration as essential to the significance of that catholicity. These points may be summed up in three propositions: that the Church (*a*)

possesses a universal faith; (*b*) has a universal mission; and, (*c*) can universally adapt itself to all possible human conditions without loss or perversion of its essential nature.

The Church possesses—or, we might better say, is possessed by—a universal faith. A universal faith is a faith that is comprehensive in the content of its doctrine and its grace. There is in the Church both a sufficient knowledge of God and a sufficient divine power for the salvation of all men, so that there is no need for any to go outside it for salvation. For Christian faith, there is no salvation *outside the Church*, in the sense that the Church is the highest and most inclusive level of spiritual adjustment, health, relationship to God, subsuming and integrating into itself (because it is the Body of *Christ* from whom all salvation, wherever found and however mediated, derives) all that tends to bring men to their home in God. For the Church is possessed by Christ and in its own nature is the Body of Him who is the Truth.<sup>6</sup> Thus it is of faith, that everyone—no matter who he may be or where he may be or when he may live—who in any degree whatsoever is enlightened and empowered by the light and the love of God, his “graces and mercies” (in von Hügel’s phrase), is to that degree a sharer in the self-giving life of the eternal Word. And as the Church is the continuing Body in this world of that eternal Word become incarnate, so those who are enlightened and empowered by that Word are made members of the Church and receive their salvation within it—even though they may have no knowledge of the fact.

Such a conception necessarily involves the doctrine of “the soul of the Church,” to which St. Augustine devoted time and thought—and concerning which a valuable essay has been written recently by Fr. Victor White, O.P. The view which we

have set forth raises, of course, the question, "Who are members of the Church?" To which the correct answer is, "*God* knows."

Naturally, this is true only when one is speaking of the company of all those who are of "the mystical Body of Christ, which is the blessed company of all faithful people," and who shall hear His voice calling them to eternal joy in the presence of God. Obviously, in theory, it is easily possible for us to determine, from the institutional and hierarchical point of view, who are and who are not members of the Church. They are members of the Church who are duly baptized. But even here there is a difficulty in drawing a precise line of demarcation. For baptism may be in other ways than by the actual use of water and the proper Trinitarian form of words. There is also, the Church has insisted from its earliest days, a true baptism for those who are "baptized in blood"—that is, for those who are martyrs for the faith and may very likely not have been able to receive actual baptism in water; and likewise, there is "baptism by desire" for those who would wish baptism by water, but for some valid reason have been prevented from undergoing the regular and normal rite. So Christian theology has consistently taught.<sup>7</sup> To these two classes, we must add (as our earlier comment would indicate) those who have been baptized, as it were *by intention*—and we must point out that this intention is not always conscious, as is suggested by the notion of "baptism by desire," but is often unconscious and perhaps known not even by the person himself but only by God alone. That is to say, it is concerned with the question of *invincible ignorance*, as well as with the question of the degree to which actual conscious consent is necessary in order to secure due intention for baptism.



As M. Jacques Maritain has so ably pointed out in a recent essay,<sup>8</sup> the soul of the Church includes all those who adhere to the truth, no matter where or how that truth is found. But naturally again, for purposes of statistical computation and to secure institutional efficiency, the membership of the Church in very human terms must be determined, empirically speaking, and this can be done only by numbering those who have undergone baptism by water with the proper Trinitarian form of words. Such baptism, however, does not in itself *guarantee* salvation, although it is the most certain road toward it, since the institutional Church, in its empirical reality, is that sphere in which the grace of God most signally secures such release as shall bring opportunity of salvation. This is because of the Church's unique character as the this-worldly embodiment of the continuing supernatural Body of Christ. Yet it is a tragic fact, which must be humbly acknowledged, that there can be those who are duly baptized and in every outward sense full members of the institutional, empirical Church, who are far from the true life of the Church, farther indeed than many who have never even heard the name of Jesus. Such is a fact; and it is worth remembering, over and again, that the Council of Trent<sup>9</sup> very wisely said that one of the sins worthy of anathematizing was the saying that one is *assured* of salvation; this is a Reformation heresy, not a Catholic truth.

But it is of faith, nevertheless, that the Church has sufficient truth of God and grace from God to save all men. It is not necessary for any individual at any time to have for himself some additional faith or knowledge, beyond that which the Church provides. It is incorrect to assume, as did the ancient gnostics, that one should have what Dr. Frank Gavin used to call "a private telephone connection with the Almighty" in

order to be assured that salvation is possible for him. The gnostic controversy settled this matter once and for all. In the public faith, the public rites, and in the other public manifestations of the life of the Catholic Church, there is that sufficiency which is of God. Therefore, those who as loyal members of the Church loyally employ all that is there given them have the guarantee that they can thereby come to the fullness of life in Christ which it is the task of the Church to bring to men. This is why the common sense of the faithful knows that it is both dangerous and blasphemous to attempt to "teach the Church." Rather, one seeks—if one is wise and humble—to bring out the latent treasures in the Church's own life, and to enter the more deeply into their meaning and value. Even the great theologian and scholar, as far as he is concerned with the explicit faith of the Church and its implicit meaning, is not bringing something new to add to it so much as helping in the expression, in more adequate form, of that which is eternally of the faith as it has been received from the initial impulse which was the impact of God-in-human-life upon other human lives, with *their* response in love and worship and service to that initiative.

The catholicity of the Church includes also the concept of the universal mission of the Body of Christ. The Church is not an institution established for the benefit of a small and selected group of supposedly holy men and women. *All* men and women are called to be saints; and all are in fact saints-in-the-making, so far as they are members of the Church, living in its life and living with its life. The Church, therefore, is for all men in all places, without distinction of particular religious genius or religious endowment or religious development. Perfectionism is no mark of the institutional Christian Church; and the idea

that it is part of "the communion of saints," which is a valid idea, does not mean that the Church militant is the fellowship of those who are already perfect; rather, it means that it is the fellowship of those who, with whatever failures, are on the road to that perfection which God has prepared for men, whether they be far along the road or only a short way from its very beginning.

It is obvious to everyone that the Church is not limited in its membership to Americans or to Europeans or to any other special national or racial group. It is often forgotten, however, that it is not limited to any one of the various special types of person who may be found in the world of men—not only so far as intelligence is concerned (which few would assert)—but more significantly so far as mystical or ethical fervor, or any such special quality as is often associated with *religion*, may be concerned. The catholicity of the Church implies that it is to be the spiritual home of all men, be they wise or simple; be they mystics or common sense, hard-headed, practical business men; whether or not they be *religiously-minded* in the narrower sense of having a keen interest in so-called *religious matters*; whether or not they be those who live "as in the great Taskmaster's eye"; whether they be those to whom the categorical imperative comes frequently or only as a very slightly known visitor. The parable of the drag-net clearly suggests this wide understanding of the Church. Its truth is essentially Christian, even if the parable were not used in the personal teaching of our Lord Himself with this particular implication or had no such original suggestion in the thought of the primitive Church. The Church of God, as Catholic, is a *corpus permixtum*, not only of the good and bad, as St. Augustine<sup>10</sup> meant when he so described it, but also of all degrees and kinds of good-



ness and badness. It is indeed, as Dr. H. D. A. Major used to point out to his Oxford students with a twinkle in his eye, "a mixed bag, a very mixed bag."

So be it. For here the phrases of George Tyrrell, with which we opened this chapter, have a very particular significance. It is the universality of appeal, the generosity of welcome, which is the true genius of the Catholic Church. It is no narrow sect, no private cult, no privileged society for the peculiarly elect. On the contrary, it is the Body of Christ, and it is intended for all men who as men are members of the human race and hence are those whom the God-Man has by His incarnation made brothers of Himself and possible sharers in His eternal blessedness.

Yet such a statement about the Catholic Church might be very dangerous, and might in time lead to a willed or unwilled perversion of the Church's faith and life and worship, were it not for the final consideration which the catholicity of the Church suggests to our minds. This is the truth that the Church as catholic is of such a nature that its faith, its worship, and its life can in fact be adapted to all sorts and conditions of men, and to the changing circumstances of successive ages, without loss or without change in its essential identity. The Church is catholic because it can be so universally adapted, without danger; it is catholic, because with this adaptation it remains a self-identical stream of belief and practice. Observably this has been true in the history of the Christian tradition. The type has clearly remained constant, dogmatically as well as in worship and in quality of *engraced* life; but there have been almost countless varieties of adaptation to the several cultures to which the Christian tradition of belief and practice has been brought. In Europe, in England, in America, in India, in China

and Japan, in Africa—here is indeed a rich variety, with great modifications in many directions; and yet the Church teaches, in each place and with many differences in presentation, emphasis, and responsive apprehension, the same essential faith, worships God in the same essential manner, and imparts to men and evokes from men the same characteristic quality of supernatural life in Christ. It is precisely this amazing adaptability of Christianity, not only in the present age but during the centuries behind us and in prospect during the centuries which are before us, which makes it possible to see that the Church is a living thing and not a dead and inert tradition. Its tradition is so alive that it can develop without the danger of some disastrous loss of continuity or identity. The past has shown this; the future promises it. The Church, because of the very fact that it is catholic in this sense, is not tied down to a static conception of orthodoxy. It can welcome into its orthodox understanding of God and His ways with men all truth from every source, set its faith in the new context, and face fearlessly a new world, because it is a tradition which is adaptable in this healthy organic manner.

Doubtless there have been and doubtless there will be times when the attempt at adaptation is carried too far. But the organic nature of the Church, with its organic life, will guarantee that the Church can and will recover from its temporary aberration. It may, indeed, be said that the remarkable power of the Church in such regeneration and rehabilitation, historically manifested at times when adaptation has gone too far, is one of the most important indications that there is about this society something which is more than merely human. The stress which we have laid, in this chapter, on persistence through change leads us to the recognition of the essential

apostolicity of the Church, to which our next chapter will be devoted. But it leads us also to a deepening of our conception of the Church's essential catholicity. And it may suggest to us a rather more generous willingness than has sometimes been found to welcome the consistent and loyal effort to relate the Christian faith to ever wider areas of human life, and to find in these areas such material as shall have the effect of bringing out implicit and latent elements in the rich, dogmatic, liturgical, and moral tradition of Christianity.

If we take the notion of *body* seriously, we shall see that much of the development of a man is made possible because of his willingness to "go out of himself" and become involved in the affairs of other men; to lose himself, so to say, in love and care for others; to take risks in meeting new conditions and situations rather than to remain "safely at home." Perhaps it is equally true that the empirical Church will never realize many of the values of its own catholicity unless it is prepared to go out gladly and generously and bravely, like a man who can trust to his own integrity in the new places to which he goes, to seek an expanding and enriched life—doing this, inevitably, in the certainty that its own integrity of being is sufficient to preserve it from the contamination and perversion which would be disloyalty to or blasphemy of the Christ whose Body the Church truly is.

As the Body of Christ in this world of space-time, the Catholic Church acts as a cell of healthy life in the realm of history. But no cell can long continue in health, nor can it grow to its full stature, unless it is in a constant relationship of interaction with its environment, and unless it assimilates from that environment new material which it can change into its own life. There is a give-and-take in living which is of the very



essence of all true, vital being. Likewise this must be true of the Church. It is the catholicity of the Church, its integrity and its universality, which should give the empirical institutional community (which is the only earthly embodiment of the supernatural Body of Christ) that boldness and daring, as well as that sympathy and generosity, which will relate the gospel of Christ, and all that is implied and involved in his gospel, to any and every situation in which men and their society may be found. In this way, as the author of the *Epistle to Diognetus* pointed out two thousand years ago, the Church can be to the world as the soul is to the body, informing and vitally enriching every part, and yet not lost in that work but still integrally itself.<sup>11</sup>

The word *catholic* does indeed make music in the ears of the believer, as Father Tyrrell said, for it speaks the truth that Christ's Body is in fact *Christ's* Body. The Church can dare to be bold for God, having compassion on the world, strong in the strength of the Crucified One and like Him willing to face even the Cross if thereby life may be given to men—knowing always, with a sure faith, that the gates of hell cannot prevail against the divine fellowship which has been called,<sup>12</sup> in striking phrase, "the compassionate co-partnership of redemptive lovers."

## Chapter V

### THE APOSTOLICITY OF THE CHURCH

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#### THE CHURCH IS APOSTOLIC.

The last of the four notes of the Church, as these are regularly stated in traditional theology, seems much of the time to be slighted or even forgotten—except by those who are concerned with the maintenance of the ordered ministry of the Church and its essential *apostolic succession*. This attitude puts the entire matter in the reverse of a proper theological order. It is true, as we shall endeavor to show, that the apostolic succession of the Church's ordered ministry is essential; but its fundamental significance is that it is the outward and visible sign of the fact of the Church's true apostolicity. That is, its importance is in its resting back upon and expressing externally the actual nature of the Church as the Body of Christ. This is the broader and fuller meaning of apostolicity, to which attention must be given before we go on to speak of the ministry itself. It is the broader and fuller meaning of apostolicity which alone can give any genuine significance to the "ministry of the apostolic succession"; it is this alone which can make the claims, often and correctly put forward on behalf of that ordered ministry, worth the time and the trouble of its defenders.

Let us turn, then, to this question of the essential apostolicity of the Church as the Body of Christ, the social humanity in which God-made-man continues, through institutional and empirical means, His work in the temporal world. What is the essential apostolicity of the divine society?

Precisely as the catholicity of the Church may be broken down into several complementary truths, the term "apostolicity" may be divided into two parts. Briefly, the apostolicity of the Church indicates (*a*) that the Church is sent by God in Christ with a mission to the world; and (*b*) that the Church is an historically founded and historically grounded society. We shall consider these points in order, but it must at once be observed that the latter, with its reference to historical *conditionedness*, clearly implies that the Church is a society of which the faith, worship, and life are rooted in the facts of history and the response made to those facts by those who knew them. This is its basic reality, rather than the thoughts of men entertained without such historical provocation, or some set of so-called *spiritual truths* or ideals, or a religious philosophy, or some high theory of the spirituality of life. In this way, the deep reliability of the Christian witness is established, as grounded in the world of event rather than in the realm of ideas. But, to return—we may sum up the two implications of the apostolicity of the Church in two words. To say that the Church is apostolic is to state its *sentness* and its *actuality*.

We shall first speak of the meaning of the Church as possessing this mark of *sentness*. The Church, then, is apostolic because it is sent into the world to do the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, even as He was sent into the world by the Father to do that work which the Father had given Him to do. It is a community with a commission. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you," says the Johannine Christ. And in St. Matthew's Gospel the risen Lord is portrayed as saying, "Go ye into all the world . . ." The point of both of these commands is very clear. The Christian band, even in primitive days, did not consider itself, nor could it be adequately described,



as an accidental or incidental gathering of those who happened to entertain like feelings about Jesus. On the contrary, it believed itself to be, and could only be described as, the company of those who *were* gathered together about the Lord Jesus, but who were gathered together *by* Him—and gathered with the specific intention that they continue to do for Him as His personally sent agents the work which was His work.

In our Lord's own earthly ministry this is an obvious fact, as the most cursory reading of the gospel narratives will make plain. The choosing of the disciples was part of the program; and especially, the calling to Himself of a central group of men who were explicitly named His commissioned agents, to preach, teach, heal, and cast out demons in His name, should be noted as integral to His whole plan of action. The command given to this central group, "Follow me," is what we might call *a technical phrase*, by which The Twelve and others who were to be concerned especially with the teaching, the preaching, the healing, and the exorcising of evil spirits—all of which had been the Lord's own work as He went about Palestine—were called and given their particular task. It is also plain that this task, given to them as they were sent out by Him to their work, was in essence to represent the Lord Jesus, as He Himself represented the Father. This was true during the days of our Lord's flesh; and after the crucifixion and resurrection, the little band of followers of Jesus had precisely the same sense of divinely-given commissioning. Their work was not at an end; indeed, it was only beginning. That which "Jesus began to do and teach" while in the flesh, He now continued to do and teach, they believed, through them and through their actions. They were to go out to preach, teach, heal, and exorcise. They were the representatives of Him who had now been declared to

be the Messiah, who was now with the Father but would return shortly to establish the Kingdom. In the meantime, the band of followers was empowered for its work and for its witness by the Holy Spirit, and by that same Spirit was linked in close and personal relationship with the Messiah who was exalted at the right hand of God, waiting to return to the world and to inaugurate the Kingdom. The little society was sent by Him to do his work "until he come."

Nor was this true merely of the leaders of the apostolic company. It was true of the Church as a whole; it was the Church, and not the individual leaders of it, which was the representative and agent of the Messiah. The leaders were the effectual sign and symbol, so to say, the chief functioning agents and the principal actors, of the entire Church in its divinely-given task of working for Christ. Such a consciousness is clearly reflected in the Pauline literature, where we see that the Church was the commissioned society through which the Messiah worked as head of the Body. On the other hand, however, it is not to be forgotten that the leaders—that is, the actual band of apostles—were in fact the principal actors in the whole picture. This consideration has a bearing upon the relationship of the Church and its ordered ministry, to which our attention will be given at a later point.

But behind all this, behind the conviction that the Church had been sent into the world by Christ to do His work and to represent Him after He was withdrawn for a time from the world, was the prior conviction that Christ Himself had been sent into the world by the Father. Certainly this was His own clear conviction. It is even more certain that the early Church regarded it as the very heart of the entire gospel: that the God of Israel had sent His Son, who is also the Messiah,

into the world so that He might carry out the Father's special work of preparing and later of establishing the Kingdom where God would reign. Hence it is that the first and chief element in the apostolicity of the Church, as the New Testament portrays it, is its *sentness*. In the order which we have described in earlier chapters of this book, the *sentness* is *from* God *to* Christ the God-Man *to* the Church as the continuing embodiment of the God-Man *to* the Church, in its empirical, institutional reality in this world, for the express purpose of doing the work of God. The Church has a task, set for it by God in Christ; and for the fulfilment of that task, it was created and empowered and sent.

Such a central concern for its apostolicity delivers the Church from the necessity of being interested merely in the sort of response it is able to obtain from men. If the Church as the Body of Christ is loyally doing its work, it is teaching, preaching, healing, and exorcising, as its Lord taught, preached, healed, and exorcised. In our modern language, that is to say, the Church is relating men to God, preaching the love of God and His saving power, proclaiming the necessity for obedience to His righteous will, mediating the life of God in Christ to sinning men, bringing healthy adjustment to the true realities which govern the world, offering to God the sacrifice of praise which is His due. It is bringing God to men and bringing men to God. That was the work of God-made-man. Jesus Christ, as God-Man, is the mediator between God and man by being Himself both God and Man. God-in-a-human-life makes all human life God's and relates God to all human life. This is the Church's work because it is the Body of Christ, whose apostolicity means that it is divinely commissioned and sent to do the work of its head, Christ. Therefore, from at least one



point of view, it is a matter of indifference whether or not men hear and accept. By this we mean, not that the Church is indifferent to men, but that it is not the Church's concern, nor does the Church dare, to reduce its gospel to the level of sheer and simple acceptance by men who do not understand its real task nor wish to hear its proclamation of saving truth. Neither is the Church to accommodate its faith or its life to a human society which regards it simply as ornamental or (and in a way this is worse) adjectival to its own existence. When the Church is about its proper business, the work which it is doing is Christ's work of redemption.

It is of the essence of the Church to be sent as God sent Christ. The Church is to speak for God in Christ; it is to act for God in Christ; it is to live for God in Christ; it is to work for God in Christ. No matter what may happen in consequence, that is the Church's obligation because that is the Church's true nature as sent by God in Christ. If the result of such loyalty—we may remark in passing—be crucifixion, it was so with the Lord of glory Himself; and "the servant is not above his Lord," nor is the Body of Christ which is the Church different in this respect from the Body of Christ which was nailed to a tree. If we know these things, happy are we if we do them—and perhaps there is something here indicated as to the Church's program in a secular and secularized society.

The second meaning of the term apostolic is to be found in what we have called the Church's *actuality*. This is based upon the historical, factual nature of the Christian gospel. The Christian gospel, as we have already insisted, is not the result of a guess, neither is it a dream, a theory, an idea, or a philosophy. As the late Archbishop of Canterbury so well said, it is here as the consequence of a fact. The impact upon men of the total

personality of Jesus Christ—born and living and dying and rising again—resulted, by way of response, in the Christian fellowship of believers; it is this which is of such fundamental importance. In the late Dr. Temple's words, Christianity did not come into existence as "a doctrine, or a system of theology, or a code of ethics, or a way of life"; it came into being as the result of "a life actually lived, culminating in an actual death and actual resurrection, upon the plane of history."<sup>1</sup> This means, first of all, that the Christian community is built on a factual basis—it has about it an actuality which can belong to no mere idea. But it means more; it means that it is also true, and of supreme importance, that when the days of His flesh were at an end, Christ did not leave behind Him a mere memory. He left a society which had come into being through His action and *remembered* Him in a profound sense—remembered Him by being concerned to bring Him, even more significantly by being created to bring Him, conceived as its divine and human Lord, into direct and vital connection with the day-by-day life which was all about it.

Now the only way in which we know about the Lord Jesus is through the testimony of this society. And this society itself is utterly dependent for its faith upon the apostolic witness as to the reality of the fact from which it takes its rise. Modern Biblical criticism and especially the recent work of the new school known as form-criticism has made this dependence abundantly clear, even if in a somewhat unusual manner. Our knowledge of Christian origins, and, by implication, our knowledge of that which makes us Christian, is mediated to us by a teaching Church. Perhaps it would be better to say a *witnessing* Church. All that we significantly know of Jesus and His impact upon men is given to us through the writings of the primitive

Christian community. The writings themselves are the collection of oral tradition circulated amongst early believers in the Lord. They are writings which are concerned to tell us of the impact made upon men by Jesus; and it is only in terms of their response to the fact of Christ that we can come to know whatever we do significantly know about Him. In another place, we have seen that this is the only way in which we can hope to come to the real Jesus of history, as more than the vaguest figure barely mentioned by secular historians. In the conventional sense of the words, there is no *biographical* Jesus; there is only Jesus as He is made known to us through the stories told about Him by those who believed Him to be the Lord and Saviour of men.<sup>2</sup>

The Christian faith, therefore, rests back upon the essential apostolicity of the Church. It could not exist were it not for the apostolic witness which must be taken by the Christian believer as reliable and sound. This does not mean, naturally, that every detail of the story about Jesus must be taken as literally a record of historical event. But it does mean that the story as a whole is accurate in its total impression. Indeed, there is no reason why such general soundness and reliability should not be granted; only a preposterous scepticism, accepted in no other area of historical investigation, would rule out a historical Jesus whose actual life was very much like, even if not in all respects literally identical with, the stories told about Him by the primitive Church and handed on from generation to generation until at length they were incorporated in the books which we call the Four Gospels. It may be said, with Pascal,<sup>3</sup> that the Catholic faith depends on the apostles and upon the conviction that those apostles were *ni mentis ni menteurs*



(neither fooled nor liars) about the matter which was closest to their heart and existence.

If the Christian faith by its very nature is so based upon the apostolic witness, the Catholic Church itself is by *its* very nature an apostolic Church. Such an insight was behind the insistence of the early Christian theologians and the apologists that there must be a regular, definite, and traceable relatedness of the community to the primitive days of the Church. This was to be secured, they maintained, by the apostolic succession of bishops. The Fathers of the Church, therefore, were ready to offer a list of names—names of men who in succession from the earliest times had held and had taught the same faith as the truth of the gospel. These lists were open and public lists, as opposed to the idea that there could be special secret or novel hidden avenues of approach such as the gnostics outside of the Church or the docetics within it would have proposed. The leadership of the Church must be so united and continuous with the earliest life of the Christian fellowship that there could be no doubt concerning the truth and accuracy of the teaching.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the Apostles' Creed was soon accepted as having the value of preserving in convenient form the essential significance of that which had been taught from apostolic times. And the New Testament itself was accepted and employed not as *rule of faith*—to say that would be to succumb to a Reformation heresy<sup>5</sup>—but as the essential primitive record of what in fact was the initial impulse which gave rise to the Christian religion and also as the record of the apostolic response to that impact, in terms of which, as we now see, it is alone to be known and understood in its true meaning.

The apostolicity of the Church, therefore, means both the *sentness* and the *actuality* of the Church. Otherwise put, it

means that the Church is the community designed to carry on the work of Christ and as such is dependent upon the historical facts recorded and believed in the earliest days of its existence. But it is quite clear that such apostolicity demands some carrier, some symbolic form which is more than *mere* symbol because it is also effectual in carrying on the process. It is precisely this which is meant when the "ministry of apostolic succession" is claimed as of the essence of the Church's life.

At the moment, our interest is not in the matter of the episcopate, although we shall have occasion to return to that order of ministry. Our present concern is with the theological truth which is involved in the notion of apostolic succession. In the first instance, then, the ordered ministry of the Church is necessary because any society—even the mystical Body of Christ—must, in this world and as an empirical institution, possess such leaders as shall act for the entire society. But the apostolic ministry of the Christian Church is not an incidental matter. It is essential to the Church. For, if the Church as a whole is sent by God through Christ to do a specific task in the world, it would seem to follow that the ministry of the Church—a necessary factor in any society—must have the same quality which attaches to the Church itself. The ministry must be as the Church. It cannot be something taken up by a man for himself; it must be a ministry which is given to him and into which he is also sent, by those who are themselves appropriately commissioned for that purpose, on behalf of the Body of Christ in which, for which, and by which he is commissioned. This is the theory which is behind the apostolic succession. It is linked very closely—indeed indissolubly—to the Church in its nature as Body of Christ, since in this capacity the Church calls men, commissions men, and sends men forth to speak and

act, not for themselves, but on behalf of the Church. It is the Church *in persona Christi*<sup>6</sup> which ordains men to its ministry; and as the Church which ordains is apostolic, so those whom it ordains are ordained to an apostolic ministry.

This theological consideration explains the traditional insistence of the historical Christian Church on the sacramental nature of holy order. It is not simply that the ceremony of ordination conforms to the sacramental principle in that the manner in which a man is made a minister is with the laying-on of hands and a proper form of words, which therefore can be understood as a physical expression of a spiritual reality. The reason is much deeper than that. The point is that the ordered ministry itself is a sacrament of the invisible apostolicity of the Church as the Body of Christ. The ordained minister is a representative and functional agent of that action which is the true work and nature of the entire Catholic Church. His work as minister, like his office as minister, is solely as an agent of the Body of Christ. That is what is meant by calling him, as minister, an officer of the Church, and by calling his acts, as minister, official acts.<sup>7</sup> For example, when the priest offers the Holy Eucharist, when he blesses or absolves, when he preaches, when in his pastoral ministrations he shepherds the flock, he does these as the commissioned agent of the Church. It is not really he but the Church which is offering, blessing, absolving, preaching, and shepherding. And this means that it is Christ—who is God-made-man—who is performing these things. It is of Christian faith that Christ was sent by God to perform in this way the work of God; the Church has been sent by Christ to carry on His work. The ordained minister of the Church has been set apart by the Church—acting in this regard as always *in persona Christi*—to perform for it the work of Christ, to act in this



capacity since the Church as a whole is for obvious reasons unable to perform the several acts of offering, blessing, absolving, preaching, and shepherding unless they are done by some individual person who is *of the Church*. The ordered ministry of the Body of Christ, therefore, is the sacrament of the Church's apostolicity, which is to say, of the Church's essential nature.

Furthermore, the ordained minister is not set apart by the Church for the purpose of doing anything as of himself in his ministerial capacity. He is not expected to preach his own ideas, clever and sound as they may be. The rites of the Church, also, like the Church's faith, are not his rites, nor are the moral implications of Christianity his own deductions from the truth. All these are of the Church; and it is solely for the Church and of the Church's tradition that the ordained minister acts and speaks. This does not at all imply that he cannot interpret that which the Church gives him to say and to do. In fact, as far as he is a man and therefore a free moral agent—and ordination does not make him less a man, despite some appearances to the contrary!—he is bound to do this interpreting, whether he intends it or not. Inevitably, he will preach the Church's faith as it is given him to see and understand it, after the most profound thought and most careful study; inevitably, he will celebrate the Church's sacraments as his own peculiar voice and manner demand, although he will never "personalize" these ceremonies; inevitably, he will expound Christian morals as his own insight into the Christian moral tradition gives him to know that tradition. But as an ordained minister he is not seeking to act in a strictly personal capacity, except in that personal capacity which is his by *character*.<sup>8</sup> He is indelibly stamped, at ordination, as an ordained agent and representative,

functioning for the Church which is the Body of Christ, speaking for it, acting for it, and always accountable to it. Any other conception of the nature of holy orders reduces the minister to the level of the agent of the particular congregation of his contemporaries to whom he happens to minister; or he becomes the head of the particular group of Christian believers which has designated him to be their spokesman; or the exponent simply of his own ideas or faith. Such has never been the traditional Christian idea of the nature of the ordained ministry of the Church, no matter what some of the sectarian groups may have held.

It must be clear that the Christian ministry is always to be regarded as so much *of* the Church that it cannot function *without* (that is, *apart from*) the Church. The symbol of this *churchly appurtenance* of the ministry is the requirement that there always be another person or other persons present at every offering of the Holy Sacrifice by the priest.<sup>9</sup> The priest certainly has upon his own person the indelible stamp of one who has been commissioned and set apart to "minister in the congregation"; but, on the other hand, it is also the fact that the Church has so set him apart as its agent that he acts for the Church and cannot claim any rights or privileges *of his own*. It is not *his* ministry or *his* priesthood which he is exercising. He has none of this, of himself; he is the functioning agent of the Church. His ministry or his priesthood has significance only so far as it is the expression, as inevitably it must be, of the ministry or the priesthood which appertains to the Church itself. To remember this, incidentally, will be the greatest deterrent when one who happens to be a priest is tempted to assume airs or to act with priestly prerogative, rather than to live always as a humble representative of the eternal priest-

hood of Christ which is the priesthood of the Church as the Body of Christ.

The Church as the Body of Christ is the representative of *God to man* and of *man to God*, by virtue of its place as the continuing embodiment of Him who in His own person is the union of God and man and who brings thus the two together, God toward man and man toward God. The function of a priest, according to all regular teaching, is to offer sacrifice to God on behalf of men and to bring divine favor from God to men. Precisely this was Christ's work; precisely this is the nature of the mediatorial office of the Church, which offers sacrifice—both the eucharistic sacrifice and the sacrifice of men as loving creatures to their Creator—and conveys from God to man the divine life in Holy Communion, the blessing of His grace and the empowering of His love. It is as the representative functional agent of the Church's priesthood, which is itself representative of God and man in the person of Christ, that the priest individually has his priestly office. But this is an apostolic office; it is one given him by the Church and not one taken up of himself. Of the diaconate similar remarks may be made: the deacon is the representative of the Church in its capacity of servant, after the order of the Good Samaritan. He is as much a *minister* of the Body of Christ as is the priest, but his *function* is different. He acts for the Church in "serving," "assisting," distributing alms, catechizing, and teaching, rather than in the specifically priestly work of offering, although as assistant he assists at the sacrifice on behalf of and with the whole Body of Christ as it assists at that which it offers.<sup>10</sup>

Now if once we have arrived at this understanding of the ordered ministry of the Church, it may fairly be said that the *value* of, indeed the *need* for, such definite commissioning and



effective authorization as that which traditionally has been associated with the historic episcopate is plainly indicated. This is on theological grounds, apart from the truth that the episcopate has from the earliest times been regarded as the ordaining ministry in the Church. Historically, it can be traced back as an office continuous in the Church to the middle of the second century, at least; and there is good evidence to make one think that the apostles of the most primitive Christian times were themselves precursors, in a genuine sense, of the later bishops. Doubtless there are *lacunae* in the evidence and a few variations from the tradition at one place or another in the second, and perhaps in the third, century; but the overwhelming weight of evidence points toward a very early episcopate.<sup>11</sup> The fact is that the episcopate has had the universal recognition of the Church, by reason of its duration in time from the earliest days of the Christian community; and it has had, as well, universal acceptance as a means of proper and regular ordination to the Christian ministry, so far as extent of spatial recognition is concerned. Even today none questions such commissioning by bishops; all questions about orders are on the other side.

But this is by no means all that can be said. There is a further, specifically theological, consideration which is of even greater importance. If it be true that the Church is the Body of Christ, it is also true that the development of that Body through the centuries must have some bearing upon its essential nature. Its development cannot have been a haphazard development if the Church is informed by the Holy Spirit. Now it is clear that within a very short time after the initial historical impulse which gave rise to the Christian movement, that movement had articulated its ministry into such a form

that the episcopate had been accepted as the ordaining agent for the Church. And once it had been so articulated, it was preserved with a surprising tenacity. It would therefore seem to be in some genuine sense integral to the Church as the Body of Christ. If the Church is the direct and Spirit-guided response to the fact of the Incarnation, in all of its richness and many-sidedness, then the specific element in the response which led to the employment of the episcopal order as the ordaining agent for the Church as the Body of Christ must be understood as a genuine and valid part of the total response. Furthermore, it is worth noticing that this employment sprang directly from our Lord's own calling and commissioning of a band of apostles to act on His behalf; it is no undirected and purely arbitrary act of the Church.<sup>12</sup>

In no other way can the historical grounding of the gospel be given due weight. The Church's historical origin and the long story of its development cannot be lightly neglected or discarded. Unless something should show that this part of the primitive and developing response was alien to the whole spirit of Christianity and hence made nonsense of the meaning of the revelation of God in Christ, it must be continued as the seal and sign of that apostolicity which is of the very essence of the Body itself. This need not imply that there cannot be necessary modifications and inevitable expansion of its significance, such as the passage of time and adaptation to new circumstances might bring about. But the fact is that the historic episcopate, acting as the ordaining instrument for the Body of Christ, has not only played a highly significant part in the unfolding of the meaning of the revelation of God in Christ, but has itself been a highly significant part of that unfolding. As a matter of sheer historical certainty, the his-

torical episcopate has been one of the most valuable means for the conserving of the central elements in Catholic faith, Catholic worship, and Catholic life in grace; and where these elements have been maintained in a balanced manner, there the episcopate has been found performing its historic function.

We may conclude that it is correct to assert, without much fear of successful contradiction, that the burden of proof rests on those who would disregard or reject the episcopate. The Offices of Instruction in the American Book of Common Prayer are quite right in pointing out that the work of the bishop includes, as its chief element, the ordaining of men to the sacred ministry, as well as the fathering of souls in a specific territorial division of the Church and such other duties as may in the course of time have been added to the episcopal office. With such an understanding, in view of the theological and historical considerations to which we have drawn attention, it can be affirmed that everything is to be said for, and that nothing can be said against, the traditional Christian view that the apostolicity of the Church has its expression externally, not only in the obvious life of the Church as doing Christ's work, but also in the institutional ministry, with the episcopate as the ordaining agent in that ministry. Bishops, priests, and deacons—these have continued in the Church.<sup>13</sup> It is not likely that they will ever be discontinued, if the Church's true nature is that it is the Body of Christ. What may well happen, however, is a developing understanding of the several duties of bishop, priest, and deacon; a development like that which is found in the Church's faith and in the Church's worship, which does not mean a contradiction or denial. As to the historic episcopate, we may say with St. Ignatius that "where the bishop is, there is the Catholic Church,"<sup>14</sup> always remembering that here as



elsewhere in human life even when it is most supernaturalized, "other things must be equal."

*A Note on the Papacy*

It would be inappropriate, in a book devoted to a consideration of the nature of the Church as the mystical Body of Christ, to enter into a detailed discussion of the controversial question of the papal claims, their authenticity and historical development, the notion of papal infallibility, the possible place of the papacy in a reunited Christianity. Yet it would be odd if no mention were made of the Roman See, its claim to supremacy, and the significance of the Roman pontiff. Perhaps a few comments may be offered, as suggestive of our point of view. There may be an opportunity for a much fuller development of these ideas, at a more propitious time and in a more suitable place.

First, then, the present position of the papacy has developed from understandable historical origins as a result of understandable historical circumstances. But this does not mean that our Lord, in giving St. Peter some centrality in his band of disciples, meant to give, or in fact did give, to the probable successors of St. Peter, an authority which was unique and special. Indeed a proper understanding of the eschatological outlook of Jesus would preclude any such notion, even if more could be said for it.

Second, the papacy has played an invaluable part in the preservation and development of Christianity, a service for which we can never be sufficiently grateful. This gives the Roman See a supreme place, *inter pares*; and it might be said that it suggests that the Roman pontiff in a reunited Chris-

tendom could well serve as the mouthpiece of the Christian consciousness, as it enters into the meaning of the Christian revelation more and more deeply in succeeding ages.

Third, the fact that the papacy *developed* to its present place of power and authority does not mean that Rome has to be taken at its own estimate. There can be true development; there can also be false development. In this instance, we may suggest that we have neither true nor false development, but mistaken and unwieldy *overdevelopment* of a single and probably (in its *correctly* developed sense) valuable element in Catholic Christianity.

Fourth, any attempt to discuss reunion which fails to take account of Rome is self-condemned. Hence the question is insistent: What can we make of, what can we do with, Rome? And, alternatively, the question is to be asked: What modifications, what concessions, what alleviations may we expect in Rome, either by specific action of that communion or by the pressure of circumstance and the growth of mutual sympathy and understanding?

Fifth, it is fairly clear that any reunited Christendom will be obliged to give a central and highly significant place to the Bishop of Rome. It is not at all clear that this is to be a dominant and dominating place. Our best work for reunion, therefore, will be the prayer that a spirit of humility and friendship be given us all, so that such discussion as may occur shall be marked by the charity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## *Chapter VI*

### THE BODY OF CHRIST AS THE WORSHIPING COMMUNITY

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CREED OR FAITH, CONDUCT OR CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR, AND cult or worship: these are the three permanent elements in the Christian tradition, embodied in the empirical institution which is the Catholic Church, itself the earthly reality which embodies the Body of Christ. These three elements are distinct one from another, yet they interpenetrate and profoundly affect one another. We have considered the unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity of the Church as the inevitable implications of the Body of Christ which is the social humanity of Incarnate God. We must now turn to the implementation of the Church's life in faith, as it is found expressed in the life in worship. Or, briefly, we must look at the Body of Christ as the worshiping community.

In studying the worship of the Church, it is essential to remember the close relationship between belief and prayer, dogma and liturgy, faith and adoration. It is usually taken for granted that the life in faith and the life in worship are to have their result in the life in love—in conduct which is distinctively Christian; it is not always taken for granted that there is a very intimate union of faith and worship. Many seem to think that it is quite possible to participate intelligently and devoutly in the worship of the Church without a similar participation in the Church's faith. What this in fact means is that the individual who makes the attempt does not really partici-



pate in worship; he is present as spectator, not as worshiper. Contrariwise, some would think that it is possible to hold to the traditional faith of the Church without the articulation of that faith in the Church's liturgical act. This likewise is impossible; for the peculiar reality of the Christian faith is that it must be expressed externally. A friend of the writer has remarked that there is no such thing as a "non-liturgical Catholic"; anyone who pretends to that position has entirely misconstrued the nature of his faith. More popularly said, it is impossible to believe in the dogma of the Incarnation unless one believes it on one's knees. Fr. George Tyrrell in his remarkable work entitled *External Religion* argued admirably for the idea which we are here maintaining.

It is, of course, imperative to remember always that genuine Christian belief, actualized in Christian worship, must inevitably lead to *Christian action*. This action, to quote once again from Fr. Tyrrell, is not "going about doing good," although that may be a consequence of it. It is action on the level of life in the supernatural life; it is the *en-Godded, en-Christed* life which belongs to those who are members incorporate in the mystical Body of Christ which is the Church. We are not obliged to subscribe to a pragmatic view of the nature of truth in order to assert that failure to produce Christian behaviour, in this supreme sense, is a fair indication that worship and creed are either very imperfectly accepted or partially understood, or that such worship and creed are of a kind not in a fundamentally sound relationship with the true nature of things.

One cannot undertake a study of the Liturgy of the Church as the external actualization and the internal realization of the faith of the Church, in a characteristically expressive act, without a consideration of the meaning of Christian dogma—a

consideration which must precede our approach to the question of liturgy. Such reflections as we may offer on this complex subject are largely determined by several significant volumes which have recently been published—notably by Fr. Hebert's remarkably able and stimulating *Liturgy and Society*, modified and yet amplified and guarded by Dr. Dietrich von Hildebrand's equally notable *Liturgy and Personality*. The value of these books (and of others, such as Evelyn Underhill's *Worship*) is that they discuss the significance of this aspect of the Christian tradition in relationship to the whole Christian complex and not in relative isolation from that rich reality.

What, then, is the Christian faith, for the expression of which Christian worship exists? It is, of course, impossible to present a complete statement in the space at our disposal. But for our present purpose—and with the promise of later amplification of the problem of Christian dogma—a summary will suffice.

In its immediate religious meaning for the believer, the Christian faith as a whole is the response of men, in living awareness, to the presence, reality, power, and love of God apprehended as intensively operative in the totality of the impact of Jesus Christ upon Him, bringing God to men as being Himself God-in-a-human-life. And this is a response which is known and made in fellowship with other believers, by participation in a community which, as we have seen, was in a genuine sense brought into being through Christ's action; a community which by its own account exists as His continuing instrument for the effectual carrying on of His work and of His person in the world.

When this immediate religious faith, as known in the experience of the primitive Christian community, was articulated

into theological dogma, and when its several implications were made clear in the experience of the believer and expressed in the thought of the theologian, it was seen that it involved a view of God, man, and the world which centered in the Incarnation. Such articulation and implication was necessary; without the development of the immediate religious faith into dogma, the faith would have been so inchoate and unformed that it could not have persisted. In a succeeding chapter we shall discuss this matter in some detail; here we need only say that the theologizing of the faith, with all of its admitted dangers, was both necessary and desirable if that faith were to be preserved and handed down in its rich fullness.

A view of God, man, and the world centered in the Incarnation—that is, in the faith that God and man were one in Christ, the Lord of the Church. This view, built about the Godmanhood of Christ, was not only in an historical and hence a unique once-for-all fact; that fact was also believed, in the articulation of the faith into a dogma, to be “the mode by which God works” in his world, in the phrase of Cardinal Bérulle.<sup>1</sup> The world-order is *incarnational*; it is expressive and revelatory of the Divine Reality, though in varied degrees, modes, and ways. God is more and other than the world which He has created and still creates, but He is also expressed by His own action in and through the world. The presence and purpose of Reality is, so to say, both revealed and veiled by the world. But in the created order, which is at every point sustained and penetrated by God as its everlasting creator, the Christian sees the total content of the life of Jesus Christ (including His human history, His teaching, His death, and His risen and continued presence among men) as the most significant event



or act in the whole series of events or acts of God which constitute the universe and our human history within it.

In other words, it is the Christian faith, as it has been dogmatically understood, that God's supreme, sufficient, and definitive self-disclosure among men, as man and to men, has been effected in this historic human life and that which it has brought to pass in the world. Here is the mainstream of divine visitation and revelation. Here is the distinctive, but, of course, not the exclusive nor exhaustive, entrance of God into the human sphere. And it is to be specially noted, because of the bearing upon our consideration of Christian worship, that this is a divine action wrought out by the employment of common material, in human life as every man knows and possesses life. Material things, human life, ordinary affairs, are invested thereby with new meaning, for they have been used—and used *as they are*, although made more perfect each in its proper order—for that which is the most adequate self-manifestation of Deity. It follows that man and man's world, despite the horrible defects of sin and evil—but not, as the Calvinists would infer, the completely radical perversion and total depravity of man and the world, which is a denial of the doctrine of creation—are *capax deitatis*; they can be used to express God, as they are offered to Him and become channels for His action, thereby becoming once again that which really and properly they are in His divine intention.

It is precisely because God is so securely found in the central Christian event—or rather because He there so surely discovers Himself to men—that the entire world and the order of human history are understood to have priceless value in His eyes. They are, of a piece with that specially significant event which we call the Incarnation. In Christ, there is the appearance of some-

thing genuinely new from within a greater and more inclusive continuity. That is to say, Christ is not to be interpreted as a catastrophic, totally unrelated intrusion of God into an otherwise quite orderly but remote world, or into a world which otherwise exists completely apart from Him. We could make no sense of His appearance, and that unique coming of His would have no revelational value, if this were true. Rather, He is fundamentally harmonious with, genuinely expressive of, the whole movement of God to man—a movement which, however (despite the immanentists), is not all on one level, but has high moments and, as Christians believe, is focused for us men and for our salvation in the person of Christ. This is the point which Christian theology, articulating the unformed Christian faith, is concerned to maintain by its doctrine of the Eternal Word, the outgoing movement of Deity, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, in his work as "true light that lighteth every man," and his incarnation as the God-Man Jesus Christ.

Involved in this belief is the dogma of the Christian Church itself, for as we have seen in our entire discussion it is impossible to separate Jesus Christ from the organism which came into being through His total activity, whether or not the Church was *founded* by Him in the narrower sense of the word. Entrance into the faith in Christ and participation in His benefits is through membership in that fellowship which is the Body of Christ. We have discussed the defining marks of that fellowship; let us here repeat that the Church, as the unity whose informing life is the very life of the divine-human Lord, is as much part of the gospel as that Lord Himself. Likewise, it is as much part of the faith of the Christian. The work of the Church is to continue the reconciling, incarnating activity of

God in Christ, thus making His life and power available to men and women of every age. Here in the blessed community there is the fellowship in Holy Spirit. Here the most adequate response is being made through creation to the self-giving of God, precisely because it is the channel through which the most complete self-giving of God is conveyed to men. Here life, in its truest meaning, is being used as it is intended to be used: of God, for God, and returning to God in love, sacrifice, devotion, and service.

It was in the effort to interpret and adequately to safeguard these stupendous facts, and to relate them one to another in an organism of truth which would have mutual consistency and *rapprochement*, that the central dogma of the Christian Church—the Holy Trinity—was developed. It was not merely an intellectual or philosophical scheme. It represented, not the obtruding of Greek metaphysical speculation into the simplicities of Christian faith, but the necessary obtruding of the deliverances of Christian faith (based on indubitable fact) into a metaphysic which could not properly express them. The dogma, as Dr. Prestige as shown in his volume on the patristic teaching about God,<sup>2</sup> was primarily—indeed, we might say, solely—developed to safeguard the facts of the Christian religious life as known in the Christian community. In its completed form it asserts that the Divine Reality, eternally love, is eternally self-expressive by His own willing action: *bonum diffusivum sui*. The Eternal Divine Self-Expression (which we capitalize because we mean to indicate an eternal *person* of the Divine Reality) has brought about the created world, where he has revealed unoriginate God in varying degrees of significant expression, and decisively for and among man as man in Jesus Christ: Jesus is the Divine self-Expression actualized in human life, the Word made flesh.



But the fully developed Christian theological tradition goes on from this point. It declares, dogmatically, that throughout the entire creation, as in the heart of the Divine Reality, there is also a response, the Divine Response to God as Creator expressing Himself or in His Self-Expression; in Brunner's phrase, the Holy Spirit who is "the divine Amen." That Response is most complete as the outgoing Self-Expression is most complete; hence it is in the inner life of the Godhead, and there alone, that there is a full circumcessory movement of the three eternal *persons*, God-Source, God-Expressive, God-Response, of the one divine nature. But in the created world, that Response is also to be found. The Church, as the sphere wherein response is most signally made to the Divine Self-Expression which is Christ, is the community of Holy Spirit, who *is* the Response of God to God. Moving from the experience of life in the Christian community, the dogma of the Trinity, insisting that God reveals Himself as He is in His proper being, goes on to insist that in the Godhead there are three distinguishable yet inseparable modes of being and activity, or *persons*: Creative Source, the Father; Self-Expression, the Word or Son; Response, the Holy Spirit—and these are Trinity in Unity, Unity in Trinity, one God.

Such is the fundamental Christian dogma. The nature of dogma must be considered more in detail in our next chapter; here we would stress the use of the word *dogma* itself. For dogma in its true sense is not some speculative definition to which the slavish assent of the human mind is required. On the contrary, as Canon F. W. Green has well put it in his commentary on St. Matthew's Gospel,<sup>3</sup> it is "the expression of a common faith in the strength of which a common life is lived by a community of people." The dogmatic foundation of Chris-

tianity is not therefore to be understood as an attempt to describe philosophically or with mathematical precision the inner being of God, nor to prescribe the nature and limits of God's relations with men. It is rather the essential content of what we may call the life-in-faith which makes the Christian community possible at all. It is implicit in the actual concrete Christian life with God in Christ known in the fellowship of the faithful in Holy Spirit. In other words, dogma is that which makes the Christian tradition recognizably that which it is: the Body of Christ, continuous with its historic origins and grounded in historical events, yet dynamic and alive rather than static and dead.

It is dogma in this sense which is explicated, externally actualized, and internally realized, in the act of Christian worship. How, then, should we approach the Christian liturgical action?

Historically, the worship of the Christian community has always centered in the great events of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. It is of Christian faith that, by union with Christ who is God-made-man, the believer who is a participant in the fellowship of the Spirit-informed Church is brought into a right relationship with the Divine Reality, enabled to realize to some degree his status of sonship to God, and so to find rich and new life, new and rich meaning in all life. With such a dogmatic background, the purpose of Christian worship must therefore be understood as the making of the fact of Christ—what He was, what He is, what He did and what He still does—a living reality for the believers who are in the Spirit-informed Body of Christ. In this way, these believers become also that which in fact they are—*members* of Christ. They share in His life, conquer sin by His victory,

and in the Holy Spirit they are empowered by His grace in order that they may be conformed to His likeness—the likeness which is their inheritance as children of God and brethren of Him who for their sakes became man.

Christian worship for this reason is not primarily concerned—as some modern writers seem to think—with techniques for the development of the spiritual life, although such development is a by-product of it. It is directed to God Himself and it celebrates the whole of life as given and used by God. But it does so by making it possible for men, through sacrificial-sacramental action, to take a living and active part in the centrally significant Christian event, which is the whole life of Christ as self-giving of God and self-offering of man. Thus, while the act of Christian worship has always been *toward* God the Father, it has always been performed *in* the Holy Spirit and *through* the mediation of Jesus Christ the incarnate God. For the work of Christ as mediator is not by an interposition of some new being between God and man, but (because He is Himself *both* God and man) by the self-giving of God to men and the self-offering of man to God, which most sufficiently brings God and man together in mutual love in a community which itself is divine.

The chief and distinctive act of Christian worship is the Holy Eucharist. The special significance of that sacrament is its association with the Lord Jesus Christ, in His historic life, death, and continued presence with men, interpreted as God's supremely characteristic and uniquely effectual action among men, and as man's full response to the prevenient action of God. Bread and wine, taken after the example of the Lord and blessed in His name, are, through the action of the Holy Spirit, charged with a new significance, so that they become changed



into something itself new. They become, for our "strengthening and refreshing," the Body and Blood of Christ, because they are offered to God as "the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ," uniting with that sacrifice once for all accomplished on Calvary the offering of "ourselves, our souls and bodies," and of our world and all that is in it.

This means that there are two essential aspects of the Holy Eucharist. As the central expressive act of the Christian Church which is the Body of Christ, the Eucharist is, in the first place, a sacrifice. The phrase which was just quoted from the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer indicates this clearly: "the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby." The bread and the wine in the eucharistic action are identified with the life of Christ, poured out to God so that it might become the life of God's kingdom, and through effectual symbols made available to the faithful in the fellowship which continually pleads the sacrifice before God. It is also sacrament—that is, presence and communion. The life of Christ, instinct as it is with love from God to man and returning love from man to God, is shared together by the faithful, so that it may both transform the communicant and be reflected in every range of the common life. Such is the significance of participation in "the body and blood of Christ, which are spiritually taken and received by the faithful." By means of that sacramental act, all human endeavor is brought to the level of sacrificial communion, is offered to God and received back from Him, and the entire created world is seen in its proper place and order in relation to God who is its creator and its redeemer.

But this entire sacrificial-sacramental action is *of the Church*.

As we have already insisted, it is not the work of the individual priest except so far as it is performed by the priest on behalf of the Church which, as the Body of Christ, offers itself to God in union with the sacrifice of Christ, and receives back the life of Christ to indwell it more fully. In a phrase which may recall St. Augustine's insight into the inner relationship of the Eucharist, the believing Christian, and the Church as the Body of Christ, we should say that the Church really offers itself as the Body of Christ so that it may receive itself as the Body of Christ. Here, most significantly, is entrance into the Christian event and its continuing reality in the Spirit-informed fellowship of the faithful. And this action is through material things, in accord with the incarnational and sacramental action of God Himself, who is revealed through dirt and flower, sun and rain, daily bread and wine, as well as through human life, human love, and human fellowship; who is not only *revealed* there but is Himself *active* there.

The Holy Eucharist, therefore, is the central act of Christian worship because it sets forth, in words used by R. D. Richardson, "the manifold significance of Jesus," understood as Christian faith understands Him and apprehended in the community which is His Body, empirically established in this world. "The simplest elements of human sustenance, bread and wine," Canon Richardson goes on to say, "are made vehicles of spiritual life; the Cross is commemorated; Redemption is experienced; and for a brief moment, the disciples of Jesus united in Him share His life in the Kingdom of God."<sup>4</sup> This is the point of life where life in our practical contemporary experience is given Christian meaning; this is the point where the Christian faith is stated in explicit, outward manner; this is dogma in action,

the characteristic expression of that which is specifically Christian.

Christian worship, so centered, is no more accidental or incidental to the Christian tradition than is the ordered ministry. It is an integral part of that tradition, because it is the assertion and the enactment of the meaning of the Christian event, and participation in the power which is released in and by that event. It is the self-offering of the Spirit-informed community, the community's return or response in faith and obedience to Him who is the giver of salvation. Furthermore, Christian worship has not been completely understood unless it is also seen as the self-oblation, in the Body of Christ, of every Christian man and woman, participating in the "reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice." In its deepest meaning, it is the effectual symbol for the offering of the whole creation back to God through man. It is response in Holy Spirit to the action of God Self-Expressing and Self-Expressed. Christian worship in this way both actualizes in the Body of Christ the Christian event, and also, through the Body of Christ, represents the self-oblation of the entire creation to God. It is the union of faith and life so that that which is said and believed may be wrought out in life and in the world. Without such consequence in action, Christian worship is sterile; without the worship which gives point to Christian action, life would be futile. This was certainly what St. Augustine<sup>5</sup> meant when he wrote that we eat what we are, we become what we eat: the Body of Christ, His instruments and His very self to our human fellows, that they with us may in the fellowship which *is* Christ's Body grow up to the measure of His stature.

Finally, as we have insisted throughout, this Christian worship is a corporate act, not an individual one. Individuals have their



part in it, and it is their privilege to be *formed* by the Liturgy of the Church so that they themselves in a manner of speaking become *a living liturgy*. The individual has his place. But in the worship of the Christian community it is the Spirit-informed fellowship as a whole, symbolic and expressive of the entire *orbis terrarum*, which offers itself and the world to God, and receives back that world transformed by His presence and loving power. Worship is the true expression of the Christian life in fellowship with God and with men; it is the true expression of the Church's being as the central, although not the only, channel for such offering and such fullness of life. Once more, then, it is seen that the faith, worship, and life of the Christian community as Body of Christ form an organic unity. The Athanasian Creed says: "The Catholic Faith is this: that we worship . . ." That is true; worship is essential, integral, the heart of religion, for its meaning is the expression of the faith which is the response of man to God's prevenient action. But unless such worship is reflected in the whole content of the Church's life, and unless the Church and its members strive to make this a world where such worship with the whole of their lives is possible for *all* men, even the humblest, we stand under condemnation. For we are then the salt which has lost its savor.

## Chapter VII

### THE FAITH WHICH THE CHURCH PROCLAIMS

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AT HIS ORDINATION TO THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH, THE clergyman is commissioned to preach a *given* faith which is the faith of the Catholic Church. He is not commissioned nor expected to use the Church's pulpit as a sounding-board for his own particular and personal opinions. The point is, of course, that the Catholic Church has a faith, a dogmatic faith—by which we mean a faith which is essential to its *life* in faith—and the individual minister undertakes, when he offers himself for this work of ministering in the Church, to act in this respect as in others as the functional representative of the whole Church. Yet it is extraordinary how many seem to overlook this fact, which ought to be clear from even the most superficial reading of the offices for ordination.

It would be a denial of the integrity of the Church and of the continuity of the Church as the Body of Christ, if the faith which it believed and preached—or permitted its clergy to proclaim from its pulpits in an official capacity—were in the strictly popular sense a *contemporary faith*; that is, one which was unrelated or only very loosely related to the historical tradition and the long witness of Christian belief and experience in the years since the events in Palestine from which the distinctive Christian complex took its origin. As we shall see later, the givenness of the faith and its dogmatic quality do not make impossible a genuine development in the Church's belief; neither do they rule out rethinking by the individual clergyman

or scholar, nor the obvious truth that any preacher must preach the faith as it makes itself clear to him. But they do make impossible and they do rule out an individualistic and sheerly personal conception of Christian belief.

In truth, it must be said that the Catholic Church as the Body of Christ is commissioned so far as its faith is concerned to preach but one thing: "the faith once delivered to the saints." But this phrase is very likely to be misunderstood. It may be thought that such faith means, in itself, a set of dogmatic theological *propositions*. This is not the case. Even for the author of the Epistle of Jude, from whom the scriptural words are taken, it could not have meant that, since there was no formal dogmatic theological proposition which would have been available to him. Rather, the phrase should be taken to mean the faith which is the basic conviction of Christian history and experience, given to *the saints* or believers as they responded to the reality of God's act in Christ. It is the *foundation-belief* that God has for men taken supreme action in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is so significantly and centrally the act of God for man that He is determinative and decisive in history and in man's entire relationship with God. Dr. C. Harold Dodd, in his notable work on the primitive gospel,<sup>1</sup> has shown us that this conviction was the very ground of all Christian preaching, *kerygma*—the bold proclamation of the act of God for men in Christ. Such is the faith once delivered; it is the assertion that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, that God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that in Christ dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, that God hath shined in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of



His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. We may express this in any one of the biblical texts just quoted, or in as many others as we may find to express the act of God in Christ for the redemption of men.

The Church's task is to preach this faith, since it is the faith which gives to the Church itself its only *raison d'être*. There would be no Church were there not this faith; there could be no Church without this faith, or at least no Church in the sense of a community which might be recognizable as the Christian fellowship, identical with itself and continuous with its own past.

Now this initial faith, as Dr. Nathaniel Micklem has so satisfactorily argued,<sup>2</sup> must in itself be put in a dramatic form so far as its original statement is concerned. It is all in terms of movement, in terms of action; and this is true both of the divine and of the human sides of the faith. It is about that which God in Christ did for the salvation of man; it is about that which man has done and is to do in response to the divine action on his behalf. The faith therefore is a *story*; in the famous phrase from Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, but with a somewhat different meaning from that which is at least suggested in the poem, it is "truth embodied in a tale." It is truth which in order to be stated at all *requires* a "tale." There is no way of stating the faith unless one tells a story—the story, in dramatic terms, of what God has done, and of what man has done and ought to do when he responds to God. For the tale is not a symbol in the usually intended and very superficial sense—something which tells a story that (in the small boy's phrase) "ain't so." On the contrary it is a tale which is symbolic in the deeper sense of being a tale which *conveys* and *contains* that which it says. The Christian faith requires expression in this

manner because it is concerned with historical action. It is something which in fact was done, a historical event—and in relation to that event, prior historical events and subsequent historical events. Therefore, *as history*, it must be told in terms of a story or a drama; it must be stated in terms of something done, enacted, wrought out. But as history it must also be told in terms which have in them something of the element of the *mythological*, since history—when into it is brought that which concerns relationships obtaining between time and eternity—cannot be told without that element.

Hence the Christian faith is a story in which there is a "coming down," a "sitting at the right hand of God," a "coming again," and many another mythological statement which would be inevitable in a story about God's action and man's response to that action. This does not imply that there is essential *untruth* in the mythology. Rather it implies that in order to state the truth of the fact, some such language must be used or else nothing significant could be said at all. It implies, too, that sometimes the balance or proportion in the story will be shifted in such a way that the significance which governs the whole will be more clearly brought out, precisely as in a painting it is necessary sometimes to darken or lighten, to alter the proportions or to change the arrangement from the obvious, photographic one, in order to obtain a result that will effectually convey the total impression in the artist's mind which he wishes to convey to those who will view the finished product.

But this essential dramatic nature of the Christian faith does not end the dogmatic question. In fact, it raises that question. The Christian faith, we have said, is the story—the dramatic statement—of that which in historical event is believed to have been wrought out by God, in human life, for the sake of men.

It does not rest there, however. It must be articulated, related to the remainder of man's experience, and given its proper place in the total context of human life and history. It must be thought about; it must be stated in terms which are the result of that thinking. It is precisely here that we come to the meaning and place of essential dogma in the Catholic faith. Dogma is the statement, in briefest and most concise manner, of the position which safeguards the truth of the story. It is the concise statement of that which by safeguarding the truth of the story in all of its historical reality, maintains the identity and continuity of the Christian Church as the community which takes its rise from those events and is the means for conveying them to succeeding ages. In short, it is perfectly correct to say that dogma is that which makes the Body of Christ, so far as belief is concerned, that which recognizably it is. Without this dogma, the Christian Church would be other than in fact it is.

Let us develop this idea further, taking as our illustration the faith that in Jesus there is an unparalleled act of God for man's salvation. The dogma of the Incarnation, as it was worked out through hundreds of years of careful thought, was finally stated—so far as official definition is concerned—at the Council of Chalcedon, held in the year 451. That definition asserts that Jesus Christ, the historical character who lived in Palestine and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, is to be described as *God*, of the substance of the Father; as *Man*, of the substance of the Virgin Mary His Mother; as *one person*, in whom these two, God and man, are brought together unchangeably, unconfusedly, indivisibly, inseparably. That is the fundamental dogma of the Incarnation. Now what does this dogma do? Clearly it does not *solve* the problem of the way in which one person could be both God and man; on the contrary, it states the prob-



lem by stating the essential terms which the solution must safeguard and preserve. The dogma of the Incarnation, as formally stated at Chalcedon, is an affirmation—not in the initial terms of story, but in the rationally significant terms of being or substantiality or existence or reality—of the Christian faith in the action of God in Christ, in such a fashion that the true meaning of the story is guarded and the Church is saved from error in its teaching as to the ultimate significance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There may be, and there have been, some who would prefer to stress the manhood of the Lord Jesus to the minimizing or even to the exclusion of His Godhead; these are the heretics who would destroy the reality of the divine action which the initial story-form of the faith saw to be behind and in the whole drama of Jesus Christ. There may be, and there have been, those who would prefer to stress the Godhead, and minimize or even deny the manhood of the Lord Jesus; these are the heretics who would destroy the reality of the human actuality of this particular operation in history and turn it into a fairy-story, a beautiful poem, or man's "divinest dream," so that at best it would be either a human fancy or a kind of play-acting episode in the relation of God to His world. There may be, and there have been, those who would so sharply separate the divine from the human in the Lord Jesus, that the result would be little more relationship between them than there is between the human prophet and His God, a relationship which is so sporadic and liable to frustration that no enduring unity is achieved. These are the heretics who would destroy the reality of that intimate and enduring at-one-ment of God and man which is involved in the initial story, the story which, as we recall, says that here divine action and human action are so much at one

that (while they are clearly distinguishable, since God is always God and man is always man and never the twain shall be *merged*, although they may be united in interpenetrating union) they are united in *one* life which as one life truly at unity with itself is both God for man and man for God.

A similar analysis might be made of the dogma of the Trinity, with its assertion of a threeness-in-oneness as true of ultimate Reality both in His inner nature and in His operations in the world; of the dogma of the Atonement, in which the dramatic element has always been more emphasized than the statement of the dogma in a conceptual form, because here the story is the most compelling statement, in itself conveying nearly all of the aspects of the essential reality involved; of the dogma of the nature of the Church itself as the mystical Body of Christ; or of the dogma of the eucharistic sacrifice and sacrament.

In all of these, however, as in the dogma of the Incarnation, it is essential to make one distinction which has not always been made and which is thoroughly important for our whole discussion. This is the distinction between what may well be called the *central* and the *peripheral* beliefs of the Christian Church. In other words, we may speak of the distinction between *dogmas* and *doctrines* in order to emphasize the distinction between *dogma* as the essential belief-element in the life in faith of the Catholic Church as the Body of Christ, and *doctrine*, which is interpretation of a secondary nature, or explanatory and amplifying belief, not so essential to the life in faith of the Church. This is not a conventional use of the terms, and we do not wish to urge it; in any case, the important thing is the *distinction* between primary and secondary in the realm of belief. In certain parts of the Church, the idea of *pious opinions*

has grown up to cover certain of the peripheral beliefs of Christians; it seems that it may be useful, even necessary, somewhat to extend the application of this idea. It might be extended at least so far as to see that often there is a genuine *connection* but not a *necessary* relationship between some dogma and what might be called its *covering belief*—as in the dogma of the Incarnation and the belief in the Virgin Birth, if the latter be understood in the *biological* sense alone rather than in its full *theological* significance.<sup>3</sup>

Baron von Hügel rendered a great service to the Church by his insistence on this particular point.<sup>4</sup> It is by some such distinction that one can guarantee the essential necessity for the persistence of the Catholic Church as the continuing and *self-identical* Body of Christ, of the nucleus or core of the Catholic faith in its central dogmas, while at the same time one is prepared to see that there may be differing ways of stating that nucleus or core—different *doctrines*, in our suggested terminology. Furthermore, the distinction between central and peripheral makes it possible to grant, as theological study seems often to demand, that there may be consequences of the essential core of faith, dogmatically expressed, which *as consequences* are understood by certain ages in certain ways and by other ages in other ways, without in any way disturbing or damaging the core of faith itself. Now admittedly this principle, misapplied, can be very dangerous. But it is not to be denied simply because it has dangerous possibilities. What is required from theologians is, of course, a recognition of the *dangers* of misapplication, but at the same time a thorough phenomenological investigation of the Catholic faith, to discover and state what in fact *is* of the essence of the faith, without which the Catholic Church as the Body of Christ could not be the Catholic Church



as the Body of Christ identical with and continuous with its own history.

Such an investigation would unquestionably lead, as Dr. Bethune-Baker asserted in the course of a surprising little essay,<sup>5</sup> to the conclusion that the essential dogmatic position of the Church as the Body of Christ is found in the dogmas of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, and their consequences in the Church itself. We should be obliged to add to Dr. Bethune-Baker's list, first of all, a statement that the Atonement has not been defined in anything like so precise a sense as that in which the other two have been stated, although there has been dogmatic assertion there too; and, furthermore, an amplifying of the essential dogmatic position to include the nature of the Church as the Body of Christ and the reality of the Eucharist as sacrifice to God and sacrament of God's presence in the Lord Jesus' true presence, God-Man, in the eucharistic elements. This essential dogmatic position would also involve a definite understanding of the nature of the Church's ministry, for, as we saw in earlier chapters, this is as much part of the Church's true essence as its faith or its worship or its supernatural life in Christ. Doubtless, in any thorough theological investigation such as we have suggested, there will be other highly important matters which are involved—viz., resurrection, judgment, heaven, purgatory, and hell. These would seem to be implied in and inevitable to the Christian story, and intrinsic to the dogmatic reality of the Church as identical and continuous with its historic past. Besides these indispensable elements or aspects of the Church's essential dogmatic position, however, there are peripheral beliefs, as there are peripheral practices, which are not of this essential nucleus but which for one reason or another are either desirable or attractive to

certain people at certain times. Among these secondary beliefs we may mention such matters as particular theories as to the manner by which the Atonement was effected; particular theories as to the mode of the eucharistic presence or the way in which the Eucharist may best be described as a sacrifice; particular notions concerning various ministerial responsibilities or privileges, when once the essential representative functions of ordaining, blessing, absolving, offering, preaching, and shepherding have been related to the several agents historically accorded those duties as representatives of and functioning for the Church as the Body of Christ; particular views as to the manner in which the Bible may be understood as speaking for God or as His self-revelation.

Likewise, there are peripheral beliefs in the realm of the so-called strictly historical and factual. There is need for special caution here, since the dogmas of the Incarnation and the Resurrection have their theological significance *built into* their very historical character. The mode of the physical conception of the God-Man, the precise nature of the *mighty works* which He is believed to have wrought during His earthly ministry, the manner of His resurrection from the dead, may properly be numbered among the peripheral beliefs, once the Incarnation and the Resurrection—that is, the two central beliefs in the God-Man and in His persistence as God-Man in the integrity of His two natures through death and victory over death and sin by the act of God—have been guaranteed. It is necessary, however, in recognizing this secondary or peripheral quality, to maintain that there is a residuum of truth, not at all incidental but thoroughly essential, and theologically of primary significance, in the particular group of beliefs to which we are referring. For example, the exact nature of our Lord's mighty

works may be disputed. But it is highly important—it is indeed utterly vital—to maintain that in His life and ministry that was done which in fact did convey the power of God into the lives of those with whom He was in contact, so that there was through Him and in Him and by Him the release of fresh energy from God. It might not be precisely the *miraculous*, in some commonly accepted senses of the term; but there was the greater miracle—the miracle of a human life which was entirely the human life of God because it was created by God for His own purposes, used by Him for the effectual carrying out of those purposes, and marked by such a display of creative energy as came from its peculiar relationship to God.<sup>6</sup>

This, then, is the interpretation of dogma which we suggest as basic: Dogma is the explication of the Christian story, the articulation of the dramatic event, historical and supra-historical, upon which Christianity is based. Dogma is the essential belief-element in the life of faith of the Catholic Church, if the Church is to be identical and continuous with itself as an historically conditioned and historically developing organism, the Body of Christ. Dogma is the central nucleus of belief, although there may be secondary beliefs, beliefs which are important and interesting to the several successive generations or ages of Christian believers, but beliefs which may change from time to time as occasion demands or knowledge requires. Such an understanding of fundamental dogma, we may say, opens the way for an understanding of the nature of the Church's teaching authority. For the Church speaks, inevitably, with an authority that belongs to it as the Body of Christ, the society divinely created and firmly based on the facts of revelation, as the facts have been responded to by the primitive community and maintained by the succeeding ages of the community's life.



Now the concept of the Church's authority has often been related to the element of coercion in human life—authority being equated with the sense of the Latin term *imperium*. Obviously there *is* a correct sense in which the Church, as an organization, must have an *imperial quality*—that is, it must have a definite ordering, and it must be able to use in certain areas not force so much, perhaps, as discipline. It must be able to say to those who wish to be of its fellowship, although not to those outside that fellowship, "*This* you must do, *this* you must not do; *this* you must believe, *this* you must not believe." But this is always a matter of Church practice, in which there is always to be found, although probably not usually expressed in so many words, the prior condition, "*if* you would be part of the Church as it is identically and continuously itself." In other words, the Church clearly would seem to have the right to say, "You must believe this, if you are to be of the Church in its true sense; you must do this, if you are to be of the Church in its true sense."

But why should the Church be regarded as having the right to say this, even with its large *if*? We are forced back into a consideration of a deeper meaning of authority, which now will be seen to be closer to the sense of the Latin term *auctoritas* than to *imperium*. *Auctoritas* means *moral* authority, not coercive power. It is this which is the fundamental element in the Church's authority. It is what we might call the essential *trustworthiness* of the Church, its moral right and its moral responsibility as well as its unquestioned possession of sufficient knowledge, to teach that which is of the essence of its own life in faith.

The Church's authority, therefore, is no dead and static thing, but the living authority and the trustworthy authority of the

Body of Christ, asserting boldly and yet persuasively the truths which are embodied in the story which is Christian faith, in the drama and its dogmatic expression, which is of the essence of its life. It is this quality of dogmatic authority which makes the Church the *Church*, rather than a society of ethical culture, an organization for mutual admiration, religious development, or spiritual ideals. The Church lives, speaks, and acts; and its living, its speaking, its acting, are *for* the operation of God in history from which it took its rise. The Church is commissioned, as we have seen, to go into the world with the life and in the power of the God who became God-in-a-human-life for man and for man's salvation. The Church does not speak its own ideas, so to say; it speaks the act of God in Christ. It will suffice to say, therefore, that the Church's authority is to be found in its preaching of that which is of the essence of its story, and, consequently, in its preaching of that which is of the essence of its dogma—which *is* its dogma—in its proclamation of the fact which is the act, and the act which is the fact, God-made-man for man and all that is implied and included in that total reality. The Church's preaching is the proclamation of the several dogmas which we have seen to be inextricably involved in the central story. It is derelict in its duty if it preaches anything other or less than this faith and these dogmas.

The Church has authority to preach this faith, to assert these dogmas, and to make on behalf of the Christian faith and the dogmas which both state and safeguard it, a reasonable claim for assent. Why is this? In answering this question, we inevitably move from the nature of the Church's authority to a consideration of the grounds which may be adduced for that authority. The Church's right to speak and claim assent is the inevitable consequence of the nature of the Church as the Body of Christ.

Only if it be the Spirit-informed fellowship can it speak in this manner. And it should be recognized that in respect to its authority the Church is not concerned with anything beyond the proclamation and implementation of the faith which is the foundation of its life. It is of the essence of the Church's unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity that it speak in this fashion, with authority, for God. Who else can speak with certainty and with assurance concerning that which is of the essence of the Church's being, excepting the Church itself? The Bible has often been used in this fashion as a substitute for the Church. The Protestant, however, overlooks the obvious historical fact that the Bible is the Church's book, recording that which the Church itself has selected as significant and worthy of preservation concerning that from which the Church certainly took its origin, which is recorded and preserved, none the less, within the boundaries of the Church's own life. Apart from the Church's own life, there is no place to look for material on this matter of Christian faith. The Church *may* be wrong about its essential faith and the dogmas which essentially state it; that is an arguable proposition, surely. But if the Church is wrong on these matters, then Christianity is not true, is not even a possibility in any historical, recognizable sense of the word. It is only through the Church that we know anything about historical Christianity. Another, and, it might be argued a better, religion could be taught; but that would not be the thing which has for the Christian centuries been called the Christian religion.

The Church's authority is based on the Church's right of self-preservation as the organism which is the Body of Christ. But where is the *locus* of that authority, so understood? The answer to this question is only to be had by recalling the nature of



the Church as the Body of Christ. If the Church be the Body of Christ, continuous with and identical with that which was done in Palestine in the initial impulse which called it into being, the *locus* of authority must be in the total organism, since the Church in its essence is the Body of Christ. Authority could not be isolated in any one of the members of the Body, as if one of these could function apart from or even instead of the whole. On the contrary, the members function always for, on behalf of, the whole. So it will be that the *locus* of the Church's authority is nothing other than the Church itself. In other words, it is "the common sense" of the Church at work on the revelation and response from which the Church arose. The Vincentian canon, with its *quod ubique quod semper quod ab omnibus creditum est*, states this principle, if it be correctly interpreted.<sup>7</sup> That which has been universally believed—not in its fully developed sense, of course, but in its development from seedlike beginnings toward and finally into that more fully developed and articulated sense—and the universal acceptance of which has been indicated by the assent of the ages to the developing movement of thought, as well as by the agreement of the contemporary Christian consciousness to its adequacy and value as stating the story which is the conveyor of the faith; that, then, is of the essence of the Christian and Catholic faith.

Phenomenologically, as we have indicated, this means the central, dogmatic position of historic Christianity. It is of *authority*. But since someone must speak authoritatively, for the Church, concerning that which is (in this sense) *of authority*, stating it on behalf of the whole Body of Christ, a particular agency has been designated. This is an agency which from the primitive days of the Church, by historical continuity and general consent, has possessed the right to proclaim and defend the

faith. This agency is the historic episcopate, acting after theological advice and study as the mouthpiece for the Christian consciousness and constantly liable to the check of that consciousness. The authority is not oracular, nor has it ever properly been conceived to be such in the undivided Church. A statement made by any large gathering of bishops, even by all of the bishops of the Church, would not have an automatic authority, of itself; it would possess authority only when it speaks for the whole Church, and when (having spoken) enough time has been given for the total Christian consciousness to have approved the statement as adequate and satisfactory.

Admittedly this introduces an element of relativity into the very conception of authoritative pronouncement by the Church. But in the empirical, institutional Church such relativity is inevitable, since men (even within the Church and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, whose guidance they may and usually do imperfectly follow or understand) always err, or can be liable to err, in some particular. The guidance of the Church by the Holy Spirit is not given by replacing men's fallible minds with the infallible mind of God; rather, it is given by the gracious overruling of men's minds in their human thinking in such fashion that truth will be preserved, perhaps with difficulty, and nothing vital to the Church's life in faith will be lost or permitted to fall into utter ruin. There are no absolutes in this world, as Cardinal Newman in his wiser days so well knew; the desire for them is bound to lead only to disappointment and perhaps to disaster. What Paul Elmer More called "the demon of the absolute"<sup>8</sup> ever pursues men; that demon is pretentious in his claims but he never actually "delivers the goods." Hence there can be a genuine authority without infallibility in the popular sense of that word. Such a genuine

authority is obtained when expert opinion as represented by the bishops with their proper theological advisors concur with general opinion as represented by the ordinary consciousness of the Church on that which pertains to the Church's true life in faith.

Yet it may be said that all this is simply an appeal to obscurantism. Does it not rule out completely the possibility of freedom of thought? Does it not make all growth a sheer impossibility? The answer to these questions is a simple negative. What they suggest would, of course, be the case if we had seen fit to insist upon a mechanical approach to dogma, if we had overlooked the distinction between central and peripheral beliefs, or if we had developed a static conception of authority. But we have contended that dogma is not rigid or mechanical; on the contrary, it is the living statement of the essential *belief-content* of the life of the Church. It is both smaller in extent and wider in application than many have believed, and it is susceptible of development both in manner of statement and in meaning. We have recognized also the necessary distinction between the beliefs which are of the nucleus of the Christian tradition, and the "covering beliefs" which are incidental rather than essential. We have seen that the authority of the Church is properly presented only when it is shown to be concerned simply with the maintenance of that which is of the essence of the Church as Church—that is, as Body of Christ. Nothing has been suggested which would militate against further thought and speculation about the Christian story, so that its ever fuller meaning may be seen. Development is expected, in fact, provided it does not deny any aspect of the truth that the dogma is intent on preserving, but rather is intended to bring out richer aspects that may not have been emphasized and perhaps



may not have been recognized at earlier times. Furthermore, there is no prohibition whatever against the fullest investigation of the material, which may well add new truth—truth given by God as all truth is given. Such new truth, if discovered, would make the central dogmas all the more luminous and significant. Likewise, it is quite possible that the work of the scientist and the philosopher may be helpful in such matters; there is no restriction upon it. The only thing which is consistently demanded is that there be always an initial commitment made by one who is in a genuine sense a Christian in the historic sense of the term: it is the commitment to the Christian story of the act of God in Christ, and this involves the commitment to the dogmatic definitions which state and safeguard the reality, actuality, and integrity of the story. Yet such a commitment does not preclude scientific investigation nor does it prevent the critical study of the Bible, nor make impossible the consideration of the relations of (shall we say?) recent philosophical thought to theology. Indeed, it opens the door wide to such work, because in itself it is based upon the conviction that *all* truth is from the one God who is in and behind the story to which commitment has been made and without whom there could not be for men either the possibility of truth or the possibility of human discovery of truth.

One other consideration must be mentioned here. The intention of the Catholic Church in its dogmatic statements is, as we have seen, the preservation of Christian identity and continuity. The Church would not be the Church as Body of Christ if the dogma were not what it is; the religion taught might be more satisfactory, some might think, but it would not be historical Christianity. This same intention is behind much that appears difficult of acceptance in the peripheral and some-

times picturesque statements of Christian belief. The belief in the Ascension may be taken as an apt example to illustrate this point. The Ascension as it is told sounds like the account of an actual physical ascent of Christ through the clouds to some spatial heaven where He is with the Father. But, as St. Augustine<sup>9</sup> insisted centuries ago, the Ascension really means *dogmatically* that Christ has gone from one, limited mode of presence with men to another and unlimited one, at the Father's throne, where He is present with men as Lord and King forever, since He is with the Father who is everywhere and always present with men. Furthermore, it asserts that the Lord Jesus, who is worshiped by Christians as universally present, is present with men not only as God but in the integral reality of His divine and *human* life. The latter nature, assumed at the Incarnation, is now and forever part of God, so to say; hence it is in terms of our humanity, whatever that may imply in the heavenly sphere, that God the Word must be conceived, as well as in the terms of His sheer Godhead. Such is the dogmatic significance in the Ascension. This, it can be seen, is genuinely part of the Christian story; it is part of the meaning of the dogma of the Incarnation, when that dogma is understood properly.

The Catholic Church has often been slow in accepting certain theories, because it has had the intention (sometimes perhaps unknown, or very partially known, to the members of the Church at the time or even for centuries afterward) of safeguarding something that is fundamental in the whole Christian picture. But there come times and places when at last it is safe to accept such theories, or to alter in some way or other the stress in some ancient picture of belief. Slowness in accepting, slowness in rejecting: this is the Christian way, and the Church is wisest when it moves slowly. None the less, the Church must

move. The practical solution of the problem is the acceptance of the principle and facts of tension—that there will be inevitable and inescapable conflicts, in the religious and intellectual life as in other areas. This tension means simply that the human mind is not able, at any one time, to see all sides of the truth and to reconcile these sides to the greater whole. Yet if one holds to the truth in both sides and at the same time trusts to the God of truth to whom commitment is made in Christian faith and by membership in the Body of Christ, one can win through in the end, or at least have one's part in the winning through, even if one does not oneself share in the total synoptic vision. After all, man is not God; and only God, who is Truth, can see and know the whole truth beyond all the perplexities, contradictions, tensions, and strains of our human knowing.



## Chapter VIII

### EXPECTANT AND TRIUMPHANT

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THE CHURCH IS THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST, THE SOCIALLY-extended humanity of Him who is God-in-human-life, the God-Man. In its deepest meaning, it is not a human society. It is a *divine-human* society, divine because it is the Body of *Christ*, human because it is the *Body* of Christ. It is divine and human precisely as He is divine and human, with the full deity of the Eternal Word of God, begotten before all worlds, and the full humanity of the human nature which the Word assumed in the act of incarnation. But the Church has this difference from its Lord: it is the *social* humanity of the Eternal Word and as such it is composed of men who are taken into the life of the incarnate Lord, yet remain men, and as men in this world remain sinners, with that persisting tendency to selfishness, error, and ignorance which is part of existent human life and is summed up theologically under the term *concupiscence*.

In this world, the Church as the mystical Body of Christ is empirically embodied in the institutional Church. This empirical Church is an organizational body which is split asunder by schism and rent by heresy; yet it has a fundamental unity because in all of its life it is referred back to the true mystical Body of Christ, of which it is the historical expression and reality. On the other hand, the *institutional* embodiment of the Church is not exhaustive of the Church as the mystical Body of Christ. There is much more there, so to say, than "meets the eye." In traditional Catholic phraseology, there is the Church

expectant and the Church triumphant. There is the whole communion of saints. The Church not only has a grounding in the *heavenlies*; it actually subsists there, as on earth, with the blessed company of the saints and with the holy souls who are being prepared for their final rest in God. This total reality, in heaven and on earth, united to the Eternal Word, is the true and complete mystical Body of Christ, the eternal Church of the Living God.

One of the chief defects, indeed, which we may note in so much of our modern discussion of the Church and its nature and function, has been the forgetting or minimizing of this comprehensive reality of the Church. The discussion seems to center so exclusively in the Church as an empirical institution embodied in this world that, as a consequence, little or no attention is given to the vaster meaning of the *Una Sancta*. The theologizing about the Church therefore lacks that wider implication that would follow if due attention were given to the whole company of saints in heaven and to those souls for whom the Church prays that "rest eternal" may be granted them when they have been prepared to behold their God face to face. Yet on any reckoning the vast majority of professing Christian souls belongs not to the Church militant here in earth but to the Church beyond the grave. And if it be true that Christianity is a religion which has an enduring significance and that baptism into Christ's Body has any meaning beyond this life alone, it must also be true that the Church expectant and the Church triumphant necessarily play a large part in an adequate understanding of the nature of the Body of Christ. When we talk about *ecumenical Christianity*, we shall do well to remember that within that ecumenicity which is the blessed company of all

faithful people we must include *all* faithful people, both living *and* departed.

It is quite obvious that during the past half-century there has come about a profound change in our theological approach to almost all of the great traditional problems of Christian thought. We are now familiar with a newer, and, we feel, a sounder, conception of revelation which understands it in terms of acts of God wrought out in the historical sphere, with the responsive movement to those acts made by men as men have been brought into contact with them. This conception has supplanted the older view that revelation was to be described as the disclosure of a series of propositions about God and man and the world. Now this newer attitude toward revelation will imply that we do not possess a mass of propositional material upon which we may build when we are seeking to describe the nature of the Church beyond this world of our immediate human knowledge. No longer can we glibly quote words which in the Gospels are ascribed to our Lord or miscellaneous phrases from other parts of the Old or the New Testament, treating them as absolutely determinant for our thinking on this subject. It is somewhat unfortunate that certain theologians, who should know better, still do follow this method, although in other respects they are prepared to concede quite frankly the findings of modern Biblical criticism and in general to accept the newer conception of the nature of revelation by God to men.

Instead of the proof-text method, or some modification of it, we are compelled to take another way. We must ask—and ask in the light of that which the Lord Jesus Christ was and meant and did, crowning the long-continued movement of divine revelation and responded to by the earliest believers according to their inspired understanding of its significance



and value—what we may reasonably say of life beyond death, what we may reasonably say of the probable state of those who are dead, what we may reasonably say of the ultimate destiny granted to those who have died in the faith of Christ; what, in short, we may reasonably say of the nature of the Church expectant and the Church triumphant. And in this connection we shall be obliged to attend not only to this action-response complex of revelation, but also to give due attention to the age-old testimony of the Church's experience and thought, as the Church has entered more and more deeply into the meaning of the act of God in Christ, and as this understanding has been conveyed down the centuries in a growing tradition which we call Catholic Christianity. Only in this fashion can we round out our reasoned thought on these high matters; we always do well, it has been said, to give our ancestors a vote!

The first point that should be clear is that there is continuity between the Church militant here in earth and the Church beyond the grave. Since Christ is one and those who are one in Him are one with each other in the Body of Christ which is the Church's fellowship, there can be no complete and sharp break between the earthly embodiment of the beloved community and whatever may be the nature of that community beyond death itself. It is reasonable to say that there is a true communion and fellowship between the earthly Church and the Church beyond this world. Those who have died and have by that fact left the visible company of believers have not left Christ. They are still one with Him and still members of His Body into which they were initiated by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Hence we shall be obliged to maintain the unity of the Church in all of its aspects, whether in this world or beyond it, whether triumphant in heaven or moving toward the *patria*

of God beyond the struggles of mortal life. Once grant that man is to endure in the richness of his total personality despite the dissolution of his strictly physical body, and then it is implicit in Christian faith that the essential *he* remains to all eternity with his brethren in the Body of Christ a member of the God-Man in His social humanity.

With so much conceded, it is then reasonable to believe that as it is plainly true that most of those who as members of the Church in this world are hardly in a state of perfection, so it is not at all likely that death will immediately perfect them, acting in this instance as a kind of automatic canonization of sinners into saints. Christians by virtue of their membership in the Body of Christ are saints-in-the-making; they are not yet saints in perfection. This is certainly true in this world of our common human experience. Nor does God override human freedom of choice and the reality of human growth. We may conclude, therefore, that there will be need for such cleansing and purifying, after death, as shall fit men to behold God. Hence the common sense of the Church has maintained that there is an *intermediate state* which will be a proper preparation for the enjoyment of the vision of God. The language which has been employed to describe such an intermediate state is quite obviously symbolic, no matter how literally some or all of it may have been taken in earlier ages. There are no material fires which purify the soul; but there is at least the fire of the love of God, which will destroy selfishness and sinfulness in those who are to "know as they are known." Otherwise, the soul would not be fitted for heaven at all, since selfishness and sin cannot stand in God's presence and endure his white splendor. The idea of "growth in God's love and service" is certainly valid; and none would wish to exclude it

from the picture. On the other hand, purgation from selfishness and sinfulness is also a valid idea; we dare not exclude that from the picture, simply because we are sentimental in our attitude toward the dead. It is unfortunate that much contemporary theology has vitiated the realism of the gospel picture of the justice of God by changing the notion of God's love into a *grandfatherhood of God*. The love about which we speak when we talk of God's love is a strong, cleansing, positive matter, not sentimentalism nor amiable weakness.

Since there is a continuity between the Church militant in earth and the Church beyond the grave—as both are aspects of the Body of Christ which is at unity with itself—it is a reasonable belief that the prayers of those who remain on earth may be of benefit to the souls of those who have died and are now preparing in the intermediate state for their final destiny. *How* this may be, we admittedly do not know. But the same ignorance as to the *how* must be acknowledged of all intercessory prayer, even for those still living in the world whether near us or in remote places. It is a natural instinct to remember those whom we have loved and whom we have “lost awhile”; and if it be true that “one company we dwell in Him,” there is certainly every reason to pray for them and to assume that in the divine providence and purpose the prayers offered on their behalf are not without their value. Likewise the offering, on their behalf, of the sacrifice of Christ—the pleading of the death of Jesus on Calvary, with those who have died particularly in mind—would seem to be both natural and right. The highest act of Christian worship is the most appropriate of all places in which to recall and remember the dead, with the prayer that in the light of all which Jesus Christ did for men by His life as summed up in His death on Calvary the divine mercy may be



extended to sinning men—even if, indeed more particularly if, those sinning men are now beyond our immediate companioning. The only way in which such a practice can become dangerous or un-Christian would be by the employing of the Eucharist as if it were a magic charm, with “so many masses said” as a way of guaranteeing the loosing of souls from the essential purgation and growth which may be needed for them. But such a possible abuse does not deny the correct and Christian use of the Eucharist—although we might better phrase this by saying that we do not so much “use” the Eucharist as offer it humbly that God may so use our intention and prayer, associated with the sacrifice of His Son, as may be in accord with His all-wise plan.

And if the unity and continuity of the Church as the Body of Christ include all who have been of its fellowship and are now beyond the veil of death, there is nothing unnatural or improper in asking holy souls, and more especially the great saints who have left their supreme mark of holiness on the life of the Church here in this world, to pray for us who still remain in the world. The intercession of saints is both an ancient and a normal practice in the great central stream of Christian tradition; it becomes dangerous and un-Christian only when attempts are made to employ it in a magical way, with the thought that it *guarantees* certain benefits and results. We may even go beyond the normal western practice and see that the eastern belief that *all* holy souls may be invoked is natural and right, once we have a strong conviction of *sobornyy*, the all-inclusive unity of those who in the Church of God are members of the mystical Body of Christ.

When this invocation is employed, like the eucharistic sacrifice, as a functional act of those who are of the Body of Christ

which is the family of God-made-man, it is difficult to see anything improper in such a natural *family* practice. Supremely such devotion, directed toward Blessed Mary, the queen of saints because she is the Mother of Him who is God-in-a-human-life and the head of the Body, is a fitting expression of that total unity and continuity of Christian life in the Body of Christ which transcends death and makes us one in Him.

Those who have progressed through purgation and growth, as well as those whose holiness in this earthly existence may have made it possible for them immediately to be taken into the presence of God, are certainly not all alike. They were not alike in this earthly existence; there is no reason to think that they will be so in heaven. God, as revealed to us by that part of His creation immediately known to our understanding, is a God who loves and cherishes variety and difference on every level—material, animal, and human. He seems to delight in the richness and multiplicity of things. Hence there may be all of the richness and variety in the Church triumphant—even after purgation from selfishness and sinfulness in the Church expectant—which has in the Church militant done so much to give color and delight to Christian faith, Christian worship, and Christian behavior. In this world, it has been one of the joys of our Christian discipleship that we are different. Each one of us has seen the divine excellence, adored the divine being, sought to live the life in grace, in his own particular way and in the light of his own peculiar talents; and God seems to have made such multiplicity a deliberate part of His way of salvation. So it may be that in the enjoyment of the vision of God which is the fruition of that salvation, each in his own way and each making available for others his own insight, will adore God—although the manner of that adoration is unknown to us

here and we cannot hope to have any intimate and exact idea of what may not improperly be called "the family life of the saints in heaven." It should be sufficient to know that those who awake after God's likeness will be satisfied.

So far we have been thinking of the Church as composed of those who in this world already have been of the company of Christian believers, and hence have been members of the empirical institutional embodiment of the eternal Body of Christ, as baptized and thereby incorporate into the Church. But we have seen in a previous chapter that there are those who by reason of invincible ignorance or for some other valid cause could not or did not so become members of the empirical institution. It is because the Church's charity is world-wide in its scope that it has sought to bring these latter within the ambit of the redeeming love of God in Christ. In order to do so, and at the same time to preserve the distinctive view of the Church as the mystical Body of Christ, the Church has developed the teaching, to which we have already referred, of *the soul of the Church*. By this teaching, it is possible to say that those who do not belong to the *body*, in its this-worldly expression, may yet belong to the *soul*—which is to say that they may in fact adhere to the eternal Body of Christ. This, it has been maintained, can be said of those who have known the Lord Jesus Christ in any way and, so knowing Him, have faithfully served Him.

It is at this point that the orthodox dogma of the Incarnation, which asserts the union of the Eternal Word and true manhood in one person, is essential. Without it there would be the possibility of saying that vast numbers, indeed the majority, of men have never known the Lord Jesus Christ. With it the difficulty is at once obviated. For to know and to serve



Christ does not mean necessarily to serve Him in the sacred humanity which He took upon Him in the Incarnation in Palestine; it may mean to serve the Eternal Word of God, spermatically present in all men and active in every good and true reality in the entire cosmos, the Word of God by whom all things were made and in whom they find their ground and *coherence*. In knowing that Eternal Word, whose human name (once He became incarnate) is Jesus Christ, they have known Him without whom none can come to the Father. So it is that traditional theology has been surprisingly generous (much more generous than the sectarian theologies or the Reformation confessions of faith) in its recognition that many who have not known the incarnate Lord *as incarnate*, may nevertheless know Him, under one of His many incognitos, as Word of God, and may serve Him in such wise that they merit His salvation. Such persons, then, belong to the Church; and all that we have said above will apply to them, even though they have not had the additional grace of the knowledge of and empowering from the *incarnate* Lord, and hence will have a different place in the total richness and multiplicity of the heavenly state.

One final misunderstanding at this point might be cleared up—in this instance by a sentence. If it be asked whether or not such differences and distinctions in the enjoyment of God—which is the meaning of heaven—is in accord with justice and may not be said to be *unfair*, we can answer that the very question implies a failure to comprehend that the enjoyment of God means that perfect fulfilment which is appropriate to each soul, to the *limit* of its possibilities and potentialities. And beyond that fairly obvious truth, it may also be observed that in heaven the sharing of one's apprehension of God will be of the essence of that fulfilled life in love which is in God, and jealousy or

pride of place could hardly be so much as envisaged when we are discussing the heavenly state.

The teaching concerning the *soul of the Church* does not approximate to universalism, however. Universalism is the view that *all* men will be saved. Critics of that notion have correctly stated that it really strikes at human freedom and God's respect for it. There is no other way, so far as two thousand years of Christian thought have shown, building upon the high moral seriousness of the Hebrew conception of life, by which human responsibility, human freedom, and the utter respect which God shows to this supreme reality, may be maintained, than the doctrine of hell. This is no place to enter upon a detailed discussion of this doctrine; suffice it to say (*a*) that such a possible destiny for man as alienation by his own personal choice from the horrible and unendurable vision of a God whom the given soul hated is an instance of the divine mercy and not of any vicious element in the divine nature; and (*b*) that the Catholic Church has never said of any single soul that *it* was in hell or to be consigned there—no, not even of Judas Iscariot. The Church has said merely that hell is a possible end for man, if by his own choice and after every conceivable opportunity has been given him he deliberately and persistently says "No" to the divine solicitation.

But the teaching of the *soul of the Church* says that God saves *all* who believe on Him, provided they have faithfully done their duty and sought to serve Him so far as they knew Him and His will. Such salvation, it insists further, is *always* through the act of God in becoming man in Christ. This is because the Eternal Word, by whom all are saved in whatever manner He may have chosen to use for this purpose and under whatever name He may have taken, is always personally the

same Word *who became man* and whose knowledge of man, whose life for man, whose work in man, is determined and focused in the specific incarnation in the historic Jesus which is continued in His Body the Church; which, in His Church-Body, is empirically embodied in the institutional Church in this world. Any notion which would narrowly limit the possibility of salvation is certainly uncatholic; anything less than the *possibility* of salvation for all men is hardly deserving even of an association with the name of Christian. It is in any case impossible for anyone to state with precision who will and who will not be saved, in this ultimate and final sense. This God alone can know.

To make our meaning here perfectly plain, we should perhaps define once again the sense in which the term *salvation* is employed. Salvation signifies that adjustment of life to God which brings such beginnings of integration and reality to human life, here and now, as may make it possible for that life to go on to all eternity; and finally, if the soul co-operate with the divine purpose and accept the help of divine grace, to win its place in God's presence in heaven—a place *won*, since we must "work out our salvation," but, more significantly and chiefly, the *free gift* of God which could never be merited apart from its utterly gracious donation from God. Indeed, the only persons who will not be saved, in this correct sense, are those who in St. Augustine's phrase have "love of self to the contempt of God."<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy, as we indicated above, that the Church has never said by name who is to be damned; it has only insisted upon the reality of the possibility, the awfulness of it, and its consequences. This should give us a bold confidence, yet also inspire us with a truly religious fear of the loss of God.



Our consideration of the Church has so far, naturally, been in terms of its meaning for human life, largely for human life as we know it on earth. There is however a wider sense in which we may speak of the Church. This wider sense is found notably expressed in the theologians of the Eastern Orthodox communions. These writers have insisted that the whole cosmos, when redeemed and brought back to God, is what is ultimately meant by *the Church*. While such a theology is highly speculative and, in the too popular term, *mystical*, the depth of its insight must be emphasized. Inasmuch as man, even on this small planet, is organic to the whole material world from which he takes his physical origin, it is surely proper, and indeed it must be inevitable, to say that his redemption has its bearing upon the *whole* created order. As God became man, assuming the totality of human nature which includes a material body and all that is involved in such materiality, so the whole of that which (so to say) goes into man is redeemable and must be brought into the range of God's redemptive purpose as it is made manifest in Christ.

The manner in which the created order will be redeemed and, as the Easterners say, "become the Church," is of course unknown to us. How could we know it? But two things may certainly be said. One is that the natural world, apart from man, has in it elements which seem to point to some defection from the divine purpose which may explain much that to us seems evil, or at least imperfectly good, in that world. The other is that God's redemptive purpose could hardly be complete unless this defection were in some way remedied. It might, therefore, be said that the expanded view of the meaning of the Church as Body of Christ, which is suggested by the Eastern Orthodox and finds some scriptural testimony in St. Paul's

striking picture of "the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain . . . ,"<sup>2</sup> certainly makes good sense for those whose theology begins with a God of creation who found the world "very good," whose purposes are not ultimately to be defeated, either by whatever intransigence may have developed in the natural order below the human level or by the exceeding sinfulness of man, and whose final victory is to vindicate the supreme action which He took upon Himself to perform in the incarnate Lord.

Such a view, really, is in no way a presumptuous one on the part of man. Obviously enough we do not know much about the world apart from our own human experience in it. Nor are we able to say what in fact are the ultimate purposes of God beyond the range of this planet and its encompassing system of worlds; about this planet itself we can say very little indeed. Even here, too, in this world, we know only of the ultimate meaning of things as it has been wrought out for us men, about human life, in human life in Christ our Lord. But God as Truth is surely not likely to deceive men, nor are His purposes likely to be totally inconsistent. And that which He has done in Christ can be taken as a clue or a key to a modest understanding, by faith, of that which is behind the whole scheme of things. It is by the Word of God that all things are made; it is by the Word of God that all things are to be restored. This truth is involved in the faith in God the Triune One. It is that same Word of God, by whom all things are made and all things are to be restored, who became man, for us men and for our salvation. Hence that which the Word did, by becoming incarnate and redeeming men, may properly be taken as a focal point of God's manward movement. It is a point from which men can learn something—not very much, to be sure, but some-

thing—of that which, as it were, “God is up to,” apart from what we know to be His redemptive purpose for man. So we may not unreasonably conclude that the whole created order is to be redeemed. And as the Church in one sense may properly be called the social humanity of Christ, so the Church in another sense may quite well be the redeemed material expression of Christ’s will and purpose, transformed as it becomes conformed to Him and does His will, in the same fashion that the material body, which was an integral part of the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ, was made the true and expressive vehicle for God-made-man.

It is a tremendous and breath-taking thought—that the whole creation, from star-dust to sanctity, from the dirt of the ground to the ideals in man’s breast, from the delicate beauty of the hidden flower to the open glory of the heavens, from the first movement of life to the intimate sharing of our human loving, has its place in the divine scheme and in all its wonderful richness and diversity will also have its ultimate place in the redemption.

The opening words of the eucharistic canon express all of these truths, lifting the Church out of a concentration on the immediate and the parochial into the realm of the cosmic and universal: “With Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious Name, ever more praising thee, and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts, Heaven and earth are full of thy glory; Glory be to thee, O Lord Most High. . . . Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest. . . . All glory be to thee, Almighty God, our heavenly Father, for that thou, of thy tender mercy, didst give thine only Son. . . .”

In those words there is the whole sweep of the Christian



understanding. It is because the whole creation is full of God's glory that we can believe that the Church, which was founded upon "His only Son" who took our nature upon Him, will be a Church which includes not only a redeemed humanity but also a redeemed creation. The Church is "that ancient and wonderful mystery," of which the old prayer speaks, because it is the Body of Him "from whom all things took their origin, and by whom they are returning to their original perfection," that they may be delivered to the Father, and God may be all and in all.

## Chapter IX

### THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD TODAY

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AT THE RISK OF CONCLUDING THIS DISCUSSION OF THE NATURE of the Church on the note of sheer *contemporaneity*, we must turn in our closing chapter to a discussion of the relation of the Body of Christ to "society as it organizes itself apart from God." Our concern is not so much to sketch ideal relations as it is to indicate certain fundamental points which in our time and for our situation appear to be of vast importance. Perhaps in this way we may illustrate our principle that Christianity as embodied in the Church is a substantive, in its own right, and in no sense adjectival to human society otherwise ordered.

These are years when much in which we fondly trusted has been shown unworthy of our confidence. This statement, to be sure, has become a truism. But it is also the fact that much in which the world seems to be putting its trust for the future is certain to prove rather shaky, indeed thoroughly unsound. And that is not a truism, just yet. Although most of us recognize that from the wall upon which he was so precariously placed Humpty-dumpty has had a great fall, not so many of us are entirely clear that "all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot put Humpty-dumpty together again." Still we rely on the *horses*—the machinery and the techniques and the blue-prints; still we rely on the *men*—our human capacities and capabilities. Yet it ought to be perfectly apparent that there is only one way in which Humpty-dumpty can be put together:

that is, by the King Himself, who alone can put things together so that they "stick together."

To drop the metaphor, it is only God, the ultimate and intimate Reality, who can save men; it is only a profound trust in God, so conceived, that can restore, reintegrate, and readjust human nature. Millions of people, of course, are prepared to agree with this proposition. But their agreement is largely a matter of words, an altogether too easy acquiescence, rather than a radical understanding of the truth and a radical willingness to make the necessary act of decision. Even for those who are ready to do so, there comes always the problem of sustaining and maintaining this faith; and to maintain it is impossible, or nearly so, for individuals without the support of a community of faith, and without such expressive and empowering means of help as may be offered in such a community.

So much may be said for our present general situation. It is at this time, and with this prospect, that the Christian Church—which we have seen to be adequately understood only when acknowledged to be the Body of Christ—is confronted with an opportunity and a challenge such as have not been offered to it for hundreds of years. For western civilization has fallen. This is the blunt and brutal fact. Much that we value from that civilization may be saved; perhaps very little will be lost, in the long run. But the thing itself—the articulated and integrated scheme of life which *was* our traditional civilization—does not really any longer exist. To pretend that it does is simply to be blind to the patent facts, of which the collapse of all international law is as good a symbol as any. Those who have most right to judge are telling us that western civilization as we understood it can never be rebuilt. Of course



something else will come in its place. What that will be we do not know, and our attempts to devise it are probably all beside the mark, although consideration of the future is valuable and essential for us in these days lest we be tempted to sink back into our old lethargy. But now is the time for the Christian Church, brought face to face with such an apocalyptic fact as the collapse of our civilization, to take up once more, and courageously, its true work. It is the time for the Church to be that which in fact it is, the Body of Christ. Now is the moment when the Christian Church can speak and work meaningfully in our world, as perhaps it has not had the privilege of doing for long centuries.

It is with this somber background that one must approach a consideration of the Church in these latter days. Any other approach is bound to be futile, or to result in a misunderstanding of the task which is open before us. For our first emphasis must be on the Church as both *in* and yet not *of* our human society. At this very point, indeed, there is a subtle temptation for the Church today. It is the temptation to succumb to the suggestion that the Church shall recognize its central function to be that of morale-builder for human society; to be the guarantor of certain high and significant moral values; to be the heart of the *new order*, whatever pattern that may take; to be the spiritual dynamo behind the *four freedoms*. We shall return to this later; but here we may say, without a word of criticism of any of these ideals and values, that one is bound to insist that the Church cannot be satisfied with this mundane conception of its function and must contend against it. The Church must insist upon and exhibit the truth that as the Body of Christ it surely is in yet not of this or any human society whatever, but as the society of charity is above yet operative

in this and any society. Nearly two thousand years ago, the author of the *Epistle to Diognetus* nobly stated this truth: "The Christians live in their own countries, but only as sojourners; they share the life of citizens, but endure the lot of foreigners; they love all men, yet they are persecuted by all; they spend their existence upon earth, but their citizenship is in heaven."<sup>1</sup>

And this duality, this double-citizenship, which St. Augustine portrayed in *The City of God* as involving the two cities, of God and of men, is the only understanding of life which for the Christian can make sense of his peregrinal status, his peculiar quality of pilgrim, deeply concerned with the *via*, that it shall be good and lovely and worthy of God who Himself in the person of the Lord Jesus has trodden it, but more deeply concerned that it shall lead him to his true *patria* which is that God Himself, who has made us for Himself, and without whom our little hearts here and now and to all eternity will be restless and without joy. To bring men into this kind of life in God is the function of the Church as the Body of Christ.

The Church therefore (in William Temple's telling sentence) must be the Church. Its inescapable duty is to realize that which it is in God's purpose and intention. It is not the stuffy, stupid institution which we sometimes feel meets our eye, but the Body of Christ and thereby the society which "remembers Jesus," not in pious reverie but by bringing Him in Himself and in His power to bear upon our contemporary world. The Church is the continuing embodiment in our human sphere of the life of Jesus Christ, known as Christian faith knows Him, the divine and human Lord who, in Crashaw's striking words, "lifts earth to heaven, stoops heaven to earth." Despite the sin, weakness, and error of its human members, the Church

is the divine community brought into being by the very act of God Himself. It is the spearhead, the real and effectual presence *in little* of the City of God, set in the midst of the city of men, which is the order of relative justice. Christian men and women who are not blind will be prepared to admit, sorrowfully, the weakness of the institutional Church, the sin of its members, the error of its judgment in many fields. But they cannot forget that the Church has a genuine identity, a genuine continuity of life and balance of truth, resting back upon God's act in creating it. Their task is to labor, under God, that the Church may be the Church and, as the Church, may carry on its essential work, bringing true and eternal life to all men.

Let us note once more, then, that the ministry of the Church, its representative and functioning agent, has a peculiar responsibility at this time. For the first significant fact about the priesthood is that the Christian priest does not speak of himself and for himself, but of and for the Christian Community, the divine society which is the Catholic Church. We have discussed this matter theologically. In practical application of that theology, it must be plain that the priest's performance of his several duties, his preaching of the gospel, his celebration of the sacraments, his shepherding of the flock committed to his care, are not done as his own bit of labor, but always as that of the commissioned representative of the great Christian tradition, for which he speaks and on behalf of which he acts. So it must be that he is ever supremely conscious of his tremendous obligation to know whereof he speaks and acts.

While it is obviously the inescapable truth that his statement of the historic faith of the Catholic Church will be mediated through his own personality, experience, and understanding, it is even more true that he must state the *historic* faith, and not



his own ideas or opinions, however brilliant or interesting they may be. It is to speak for that historic faith that he is commissioned; it is that historic faith which delivers him, and the people to whom he is sent, from the vagaries of the moment. With whatever necessary modifications and development there may be as year succeeds year, the faith in itself remains constant—built upon the supreme act of God Himself, entering our human world in the Man Christ Jesus, redeeming us from selfishness and frustration back to Himself, establishing the Body of Christ which is a community of love where we may realize our true nature, empowering us to live as men and not as animals, however sophisticated, in the midst of a world *good*, as God created it, but *naughty* in its sin and failure, preparing for us a future where our personal and social destiny may be achieved.

These abide . . .

The message to the Maid, the human birth,  
The lesson, and the Young Man crucified.

And, as Alice Meynell goes on to say, it is these alone, no mere human theorizing or philosophizing (necessary as that may be), that do in fact constitute

The terrible, frightened, shamefast, whispered, sweet,  
Heart-shattering secret of His way with us.

Secondly, it is in the celebration of the Church's expressive act of adoration, which is the offering to Reality of man's whole life through the Eucharistic Oblation, that the Christian priest's duty chiefly lies. He is ordained to offer the Holy Sacrifice, which is first of all "the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ," and then the presentation of the whole of life, the natural order, human history, ourselves, to God in

union with the oblation of Christ. Here again, the priest is the agent of the Church; he does not act of himself; it is not *his* mass that he offers, but the Church's mass, the Church's oblation, and he is but the agent of the Body of Christ, through duration of time and extent of space, in performing this characteristic rite of the Christian community. This is the priest's central labor, we have said; it is to take bread, bless bread, break bread, give bread. And this bread, taken, blessed, broken, given, is none other than the life of the world which becomes the life of God-made-man. Offered to God, it is received back from him to be the nourishment of the souls of those who, in a world which is not the Church, live as members of the Church in order to bring the charity of the Church into every nook and cranny of men's daily lives.

From that act flows directly the daily life of the priest himself, and likewise the life of all those who are members of the Body of Christ. This must inevitably be a eucharistic life; in St. Ignatius' great phrase, "a living eucharist." The priest is himself to live a life which is taken by God, blessed by God, broken in sacrificial service for God, and given to God that it may be used by God for the service of men. No selfish seeking of privilege, no hunting for easy cures, no desire for personal success, no satisfaction with "institutional religion," can enter into the life of him who stands at the altar offering daily the self-denying oblation of the death of God the Son. And in such a world as will be ours, tomorrow, the demand for a sacrificial ministry will be brought in upon us with a devastating directness.

Because he is Christ's, the priest is called to be a Christ to his people: the mediator of God to men and men to God after the order of the crucified Lord. And so, thirdly, in his parish

work, teaching duties, or in whatever field his labor may be found, the priest will stand for and speak for the stern and forgiving love of God in Christ. He will be the compassionate servant of the servants of God. But this does not mean that he, nor the Church which he represents, will be silly or unrealistic in recognition of the facts about man and about men. Both Church and priest will see the sin of man, and the exceeding sinfulness of that sin. Both will call God's people to repentance and to the sacramental means whereby the historic Church has provided for the restoration of men to the life in charity. And beyond this, the priest will set himself, not as of himself but as agent of the Church, to be the faithful friend to whom all may turn, advisor and companion, rebuker of evil as well as father of those who are his spiritual children.

And fourthly, the priest will be the Church's prophet of God's righteousness. There is an urgent necessity that the prophetic voice be raised in the cause of social justice, economic freedom, and true liberty for all men, of all classes and races. The Church and its priest stand unflinchingly for justice. The Body of Christ is so involved in the life of the secular community, be it town or nation or world, that it recognizes sin and evil where they are, denounces them for what they are, and is concerned to eradicate them so far as is possible from our midst. But it must beware lest it suggest that the Christian Church is identified with any of the secular programs or parties which are engaged in this process. It is the business of the Church, and of the minister, to stand within and yet above all party disputes, and to see to it that the only criterion of judgment is the will of God, discerned in justice and executed in justice, with the end that abundant life shall be secured for men. The Church is not a *party* Church; the priest is not a *party* man.



What in fact we have said is that as the representative and functioning agent of the Body of Christ, the Christian minister is to be the *priest* who offers the Church's sacrifice and dispenses the Church's entrusted gift of the life of God-made-man; the *prophet* who speaks for the Church that which is the true word of God to men; the *pastor* who cares for the flock of Christ. All this is very old, very tried, very obvious indeed. Is there nothing new, then, which we should say, for this time?

Yes, there is. And that is the simple truth that in our world, both today and tomorrow, it will be more and more difficult for Church and minister to be true to this calling. The multiplication of techniques, good in themselves and very useful in the Church's work; the temptation to be diverted into attractive by-paths and side-roads which bear some relation to the Church's task; the suggestion that the Church can be conformed to the pattern of this world, in one way or another, depending on the social structure which emerges beyond the war's end: all of these will tend to suggest evasions or denials of the chief duty and obligation of the Body of Christ and its representative.

The Christian gospel, which is the only enduring hope of man, is to be preached—and this must be done surely in as winsome and appealing a way as possible, with every employment of new thought, new pastoral method, new science and philosophy, to make it come home to the hearts and consciences of men. But, in the end, whether those to whom the Church and its minister are sent hear or forbear, it is the duty of both to be faithful to their commission, and not to barter it away for any price, or in response to any appeal. Our immediate *danger*, it would seem, is that the priest may give over his priesthood, and the Church its true calling, in order that they may become the unpaid but eager agents of national or international schemes

or systems. Hence, it is our immediate *obligation* to remember that the Church is not here, nor are its priests ordained, to be merely the spiritual department of any nation or government, however nobly conceived; of any order of society secularly speaking, be it democratic or otherwise; of any international world-state, even if it offer worldly justice for all men.

Perhaps one may put this idea very forcibly. In our present world situation, we do not know what the *final* result will be. Each of us has his hopes, perhaps his ultimate confidence; but let us never forget that God may overrule hopes and confidences. There is no guarantee whatever that in the short-term range which we mortals can envisage, "conquer we must, if our cause it be just." In that sense, the justest cause in all history ended on a Cross; and the victory which Easter asserts was known then and is known today only in the secret hearts of the faithful, never obviously and immediately to the world. It is the Christian and Catholic Church's supreme task to speak to men, whether their secular causes be defeated or be victorious. No matter what may happen, no matter what defeats or victories are ahead, God reigns. God's Church endures, although perhaps in very different external guise. The only real victory we Christians know is the victory of faith, the faith which overcomes the world. Unless all our Christianity be delusion, it is true that while we may not and do not yet see all things brought in subjection unto God, we see—Jesus—and that is enough for this life, and the life to come. Thereby we are more than conquerors.

This position is no retreat from the world. This it is, on the contrary, that has made Cardinal Faulhaber and the German Catholics, Martin Niemoeller and the German Evangelicals, strong in their suffering; that gave the Russian Christians

courage during their day of persecution. It is this, indeed, that we are in danger of losing in America, unless we assert once again the integrity and the holiness, the separateness, of the Church, even while we insist on its involvement in the total life of men and of the nation. That is the task of the Church through its priesthood today; that is the significance of the new emphasis on the Liturgy as speaking the mind of the Church and realizing the fellowship of the Church; that is the importance of Catholic and Christian action, as seed of the Kingdom of God in this world, but seed which *this* world can neither utterly destroy nor bring to fruition. It is the supernatural reality of the Church, which fulfils its mundane task of bringing more abundant life to men *at this present* and points to the *heavenlies* where such life is man's in its fullness.

Let us suppose a fully achieved world-peace with justice, in which men and nations are persuaded to live in equity one with another. Let us suppose an end to racial hatred and privilege, an end to economic aggrandizement by Anglo-Saxon or other empires at the expense of those not in positions of supremacy, an end to social injustice and economic oppression. All are promised us. They are promised in good faith; and it is conceivable, although not entirely likely, that the promises will be fully implemented. Will the result, then, be the establishment among men of the Kingdom of God?

The answer is, simply, no. What may happen will be a relatively more just human society, a relatively more satisfactory ordering of the affairs of men. This is God's will; upon it we must unalterably insist. The course of this world must be justly, and peaceably, ordered, and by *God's* governance. But even then man remains man; sin remains sin; the Church's gospel remains the Church's gospel. To a world which, because of sin, hates



that gospel, even while it talks glibly and easily of defending or maintaining Christian values and Christian principles and Christian ideals, the Church must still declare the *whole* counsel of God. And the ministers of the Church must still represent the Church, insisting forever and again, relentlessly, bravely, that it is only by the supernatural gifts of faith, hope, and charity; by God's self-donation in the Lord Jesus Christ, known in the Body which makes Him to be alive in the world today; that it is only so, only in this supreme way, that among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, men's hearts may *surely* there be fixed where true joys are to be found, and where alone human life, in all of its strange beauty, sad nobility, tragic frustration, bewildering complexity, and degrading sinfulness, is given true and enduring significance, dignity, and hope.

## NOTES

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To avoid tiresome repetition, the author would indicate at the outset that the following have been his most valuable sources or places of reference for the doctrine of the Church: St. Cyprian, *Of the Unity of the Church* (Ante-Nicene Fathers); St. Augustine, practically all the treatises, but especially *The City of God* (Post-Nicene Fathers); St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, especially the sections on the Church and Ministry; and, among recent theologians, Friedrich von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses* (two volumes); R. C. Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood*; F. J. Hall, *Dogmatic Theology*, particularly the volumes on Church, Ministry, and Sacraments. The Classical Reformation views of the Church are conveniently summarized, for the two great leaders, in the *compendis* of Luther and Calvin, prepared by Dr. Hugh Thomson Kerr, Jr. Recent Roman Catholic works of great value are by Emile Mersch, *Morality and The Mystical Body* and *The Whole Christ*; Romano Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*; and Karl Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*. Two important works, by an Anglican, are A. G. Hebert's *Liturgy and Society* and *The Form of the Church*. For a philosophical discussion of the Church, A. E. Taylor's *Faith of a Moralist* (volume 2) is invaluable. An excellent section on the Church is also found in O. C. Quick's *Christian Sacraments*. Reference should be made in conclusion to the two books of Walter Lowrie, *The Church and Its Organization* and *Problems of Church Unity*.

*Notes for Introduction*

1. The author has been unable to trace this reference.
2. Aristotle, *Politics* i.2.
3. A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, p. 47.
4. But cf. the remarks of Walter Lowrie in his *Life of Kierkegaard*, where more of the sense of *church-belonging* seems to be indicated.
5. von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses*, I, 14, 92; II, 75-88.
6. Cf. also C. C. Morrison, *What is Christianity?*
7. Note, for example, the notion of *church-dogmatic* presented in such a work as Karl Barth's *Dogmatik*; or, on this side of the water, the summary of ideas about the Church found in J. C. Bennett's article in the Spring, 1944, *Christendom*.
8. The best summary of this liturgical revival is given in an article by C. K. Myers, in *Religion in Life* (Spring, 1944 number). Hebert's *Liturgy and Society* presents the principles of the movement. Cf. also V. Michel's *Liturgy of the Church*.
9. St. Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium*.

*Notes for Chapter I*

1. A phrase of which Baron von Hügel was particularly fond, to be found scattered through his collected *Letters*, edited by A. Thorold.
2. For this reconstruction of the New Testament material, to which the next half-dozen paragraphs are devoted, the author is particularly indebted to L. S. Thornton's *Common Life in the Body of Christ* and R. N. Flew's *Jesus and His Church*. The New Testament references have been omitted since our effort has been to give not a detailed but a general survey of the material.
3. A conclusion reached after discussion with Dr. B. S. Easton of General Theological Seminary.
4. Easton, ed. & tr., *What Jesus Taught*, pp. 121-122.



5. Temple, in a broadcast address given in London in 1937.
6. von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses*, I, 260-262.
7. von Hügel is especially valuable for his warning against this *false* Christocentrism, which he correctly discerns in liberal Protestant writers like W. Herrmann (*The Communion of the Christian with God*), and against which he also writes when it is found in its more Catholic form. Cf. *Letters*, passim.
8. F. C. Grant's *Growth of the Gospels* and Vincent Taylor's *Formation of the Gospel Tradition* give a moderate presentation of the work of this school. For a more radical view, see M. Dibelius, *A Fresh Approach to the New Testament*.
9. Knox, *The Man Christ Jesus*, p. 18.
10. E. Brunner, *The Mediator*, Chapter VI.
11. For a further discussion of this question, see the author's *Christ and Christian Faith*, Chapter I.
12. The phrase employed by Dr. William Temple at the World Conference on Faith and Order in 1939.
13. I Corinthians 12:12-27.
14. In the similar passages in Colossians 2:8-3:4, especially 2:19.
15. For an illuminating discussion of this conception, see F. Hastings Smyth, *Manhood into God*.
16. Vladimir S. Soloviev's *God, Man and the Church*, Sergius Bulgakov's *The Orthodox Church*, and the symposium to which reference is made later, *The Church of God* (edited by E. L. Mascall) are helpful at this point.

### *Notes for Chapter II*

1. I Corinthians 12:12-27; St. John 17, and the entire first Epistle of John; St. Matthew 23:8.
2. To the writer it is almost impossible to discover any utterly organic relationship of *invisible* and *visible* Church, either in Calvin or in Luther; in their violent reaction from the empirical institution, with its horrible abuses in their own time, they seem to have severed (unintentionally) the link between the two sides. Doubtless Protestant theologians will

be able to correct us at this point. Nevertheless, the logic of events would seem to indicate that a serious break was in fact made at the time of the Reformation.

3. Cf. the Definition of Chalcedon, conveniently found in T. H. Bindley's *Ecumenical Documents*.
4. The Apollinarian heresy, condemned at Constantinople in 381, denied the reality of the human mind of the incarnate Lord, supplanting it by the Divine Logos; the monophysite heresy, condemned as Eutychianism in 451 and denounced finally two hundred years later, suggested that the person of the God-Man was of one composite nature. Applied to the Church, these views would intimate a notion of the Body of Christ which either minimized or denied its true implication in humanity and its empirical reality.
5. It is to be noted that it was not so much by coercive action as by the reaction of Christian thought that the turn from the almost universally accepted Arian view, as described in the phrase of St. Jerome which we have quoted, to the Athanasian and orthodox doctrine was accomplished.
6. Moberly's *Ministerial Priesthood* is classical for this point; it quite satisfactorily criticizes and balances the views expressed in J. B. Lightfoot's famous essay on the *Christian Ministry*.
7. The proposal put forward by the Bishops of the Anglican Communion, suggesting reunion on the basis of acceptance of the Holy Scriptures, the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the Nicene Creed, and the historic episcopate.
8. The phrase is taken from G. K. Chesterton's small book, *The Thing*.
9. G. W. Broomfield, *Revelation and Reunion*. The latter part of this book is particularly useful. Because it is one of the few books which discusses the whole question of reunion in the light of fundamental theological considerations, rather than in that of historical data alone, the work is invaluable for those who are thinking about the movement toward a united Christendom.
10. Cf. Felix L. Cirlot, *Early Evidence for the Apostolic Succession*,

in *The Living Church* for February 21, 1931. Dr. Cirlot has also completed a thorough historical investigation, soon to be published, which covers this evidence and amply proves the point made in the text. Our chief interest, however, as will be evident, is in the theological rather than the historical conclusion.

*Notes for Chapter III*

1. This discussion of the nature of holiness is based largely on suggestions of Dr. H. E. W. Fosbroke of the General Theological Seminary, who has made a special study of the concept as found in the Old Testament. Rudolf Otto's *Idea of the Holy*, to which reference is made in the text, is a notable development of the same idea, although Otto carries the idea too far and makes it determinative of all religion. In the latter part of this Biblical section, the author owes much to Dr. C. A. Simpson, also of the General Seminary.
2. In *Christ and Christian Faith*, Chapter IX. Cf. also the writer's *The Christian Way in the Modern World*, Chapter VI.
3. A suggestion taken from Brunner's *Mediator*, p. 283.
4. The references in Christian theology and spirituality are too numerous to mention; the *locus classicus* for all such thought is in the Johannine literature in the New Testament.
5. This insistence upon divine initiative and human response is surely the *theological* point of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth; cf. the writer's *Christ and Christian Faith*, pp. 87-91.
6. For a treatment of the sacraments, in order, see Quick's *Christian Sacraments*. The idea here developed in the text is found in the treatment of sacraments in St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa*, where the rites are regularly related to the Church; cf. also, for a modern discussion, F. J. Hall's *Church and Sacraments*, in the *Dogmatic Theology*.
7. This point is made, not with too much sympathy for mysticism, in P. E. More's *Christian Mysticism*.
8. Bede Frost's *St. John of the Cross* gives a splendid picture of



this Christian mystic. Cf. also J. Maritain's *Degrees of Knowledge* (final chapters) for a philosophical treatment of the same theme.

9. A comment made in one of Chesterton's newspaper essays, which the writer has been unable to trace.
10. Fr. Thornton has given an admirable picture of this freedom and life in the days of primitive Christianity in his *Common Life in the Body of Christ*.
11. Cardinal Newman, *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, p. 39.

### *Notes for Chapter IV*

1. Tyrrell, *Letters*, edited by Maude Petre.
2. In addition to Mascall's symposium, reference may be made especially to Bulgakov's *The Orthodox Church*; N. S. Arseniev's *Mysticism and the Eastern Church*. Cf. an essay by the writer in *Christendom* (Autumn, 1943).
3. Cf. D. von Hildebrand, *Liturgy and Personality*.
4. I Corinthians 11:29. The writer's view has been confirmed by Dr. B. S. Easton, in private discussion.
5. Gratitude is expressed to Bishop Sava, head of the Russian Seminary in New York City, for discussion.
6. The Cyprianic *nulla salus extra ecclesiam* is thus extended by Maritain in *Ransoming the Time*, pp. 118-122. Cf. also Adam, *Spirit of Catholicism*, and Otto Karrer, *The Religions of Mankind*.
7. Cf. Hall, *Theological Outlines*, p. 286; for baptism by desire, etc.; cf. J. Pohle, *Theology*, section on Baptism.
8. Maritain, *Ransoming the Time*, pp. 118-122.
9. In the Canons on Justification, quoted in H. S. Bettenson's *Documents of the Christian Church*, pp. 367-368.
10. In his *De Doctrina* 3, 32, in *Post-Nicene Fathers*.
11. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, paragraph 6 of this beautiful little letter by some unknown author.
12. By Dr. B. I. Bell in a series of retreat addresses.

*Notes for Chapter V*

1. From Dr. Temple's broadcast address, mentioned earlier in the text.
2. For a fuller discussion, see Chapter I of the author's *Christ and Christian Faith*.
3. Pascal, *Pensees*, XII-XIII.
4. Irenaeus, for example, builds much of his argument against the gnostics in the *Adversus Haereses* on the fact that he can so trace a continuity between the teaching of "the great Church" and the primitive Christian believers. Likewise Tertullian and others.
5. For the Catholic Church, the "rule of faith" has always been the Creed, which, as the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles say, can be "proved by most certain warrant" of Holy Scripture; *proved*—that is, *tested and confirmed*. It is only for Reformation confessions that the Bible itself becomes "the only infallible rule of faith and practice."
6. On this point cf. Aquinas *Summa*, III, lxxii. Art. 1.
7. Ibid.
8. A treatment of *character* will be found, in convenient summary form, in Hall's *Theological Outlines*, p. 275.
9. Cf. the rubric in the *Book of Common Prayer*.
10. One of the unhappy consequences of the shortening of the period of time spent in the diaconate and the tendency to regard it *merely* as a step toward the priesthood has been a feeling that the diaconate is not genuinely an order of the ministry. To this it should be replied that a deacon is every bit as much a minister, although of a different order and with different rights, as a priest or bishop.
11. Cf. the article by Cirlot, mentioned above. See also C. H. Turner's extended investigation in *The Church and the Ministry*.
12. This is the point so admirably stressed by Broomfield in the book to which reference is made earlier.

13. The best investigation, both historical and theological, is Moberly's *Ministerial Priesthood*, which so far is unsurpassed for its thoroughness of treatment and effective (if prolix) presentation.
14. Throughout his epistles, St. Ignatius makes such claims for the episcopate; here the reference is to *Smyrneans* c.8.

### *Notes for Chapter VI*

1. R. Bérulle, *Oeuvres*, p. 990.
2. G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, all of which is relevant.
3. *Clarendon Series*, p. 261.
4. Canon Richardson, an essay in *The Modern Churchman*, 1936.
5. Cf. Massey Shepherd's translation, in *The Witness*, April 6, 1944. Also the texts collected in Erich Przywara's *Augustine Synthesis*; and St. Augustine's Epistles No. 272; *The City of God*, ix. 6; Sermons Nos. 227 and 229.

### *Notes for Chapter VII*

1. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching*.
2. N. Micklem, *What Is the Faith?* The entire book is a development of this thesis, maintaining the *dramatic* form of the primitive and continuing faith.
3. Cf. the section of the writer's *Christ and Christian Faith* to which reference has already been made on this subject.
4. von Hügel, an essay published in *Rinnovamento*; discussed by Maurice Nédoncelle in his *Baron Friedrich von Hügel*, pp. 184-192.
5. J. F. Bethune-Baker, *Unity and Truth*.
6. Cf. Frank Weston, *The One Christ*.
7. *Commonitorium*, paragraph 6.
8. Note the essay on the subject in More's book of that title; also his essay on the Church in *The Catholic Faith*.
9. In the course of his sermon, *The Ascension*, and in his summary of doctrine in the *Enchiridion* and elsewhere.



*Notes for Chapter VIII*

1. *The City of God*, i.l.
2. Romans 8. For the Eastern Orthodox view, cf. the volumes on the Orthodox Church to which reference has already been made.

*Notes for Chapter IX*

1. Paragraph 5 of the letter.

## INDEX OF NAMES

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Because of the close-knit argument in the text, no index of *topics* is provided. The chapter headings sufficiently indicate the subjects discussed in the several chapters, while the analysis of the chapters in the Table of Contents will cover any particular topics in which the reader is interested.

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